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DON ORSINO.¹

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CHAPTER IX.

ORSINO's twenty-first birthday fell in the latter part of January, when the Roman season was at its height; but as the young man's majority did not bring him any of those sudden changes in position which make epochs in the lives of fatherless sons, the event was considered as a family matter and no great social celebration of it was contemplated. It chanced, too, that the day of the week was the one appropriated by the Montevarchi for their weekly dance, with which it would have been a mistake to interfere. The old Prince Saracinesca, however, insisted that a score of old friends should be asked to dinner, to drink the health of his eldest grandson, and this was accordingly done.

Orsino always looked back to that banquet as one of the dullest at which he ever assisted. The friends were literally old, and their conversation was not brilliant. Each one on arriving addressed to him a few congratulatory and moral sentiments, clothed in rounded periods and twanging of Cicero in his most sermonising mood. Each drank his especial health at the end of the dinner in a teaspoonful of old *vin santo*, and each made a stiff compliment to Corona on her youthful appearance. The men were almost all grandes of Spain of

the first class and wore their ribbons by common consent, which lent the assembly an imposing appearance; but several of them were of a somnolent disposition and nodded after dinner, which did not contribute to prolong the effect produced. Orsino thought their stories and anecdotes very long-winded and pointless, and even the old prince himself seemed oppressed by the solemnity of the affair, and rarely laughed. Corona, with serene good humour did her best to make conversation, and a shade of animation occasionally appeared at her end of the table; but Sant' Ilario was bored to the verge of extinction and talked of nothing but archaeology and the trial of the Cenci, wondering inwardly why he chose such exceedingly dry subjects. As for Orsino, the two old princesses between whom he was placed paid very little attention to him, and talked across him about the merits of their respective confessors and directors. He frivolously asked them whether they ever went to the theatre, to which they replied very coldly that they went to their boxes when the piece was not on the Index and when there was no ballet. Orsino understood why he never saw them at the opera, and relapsed into silence. The butler, a son of the legendary Pasquale of earlier days, did his best to cheer the youngest of his masters with a great

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variety of wines; but Orsino would not be comforted either by very dry champagne or very mellow claret. But he vowed a bitter revenge and swore to dance till three in the morning at the Montevarchis and finish the night with a rousing baccarat at the club, which projects he began to put into execution as soon as was practicable.

In due time the guests departed, solemnly renewing their expressions of good wishes, and the Saracinesca household was left to itself. The old prince stood before the fire in the state drawing-room, rubbing his hands and shaking his head. Giovanni and Corona sat on opposite sides of the fireplace, looking at each other and somewhat inclined to laugh. Orsino was intently studying a piece of historical tapestry, which had never interested him before.

The silence lasted some time. Then old Saracinesca raised his head and gave vent to his feelings, with all his old energy.

"What a museum!" he exclaimed. "I would not have believed that I should live to dine in my own house with a party of stranded figure-heads set up in rows around my table! The paint is all worn off, and the brains are all worn out, and there is nothing left but a cracked old block of wood with a ribbon around its neck. You will be just like them, Giovanni, in a few years, for you will be just like me—we all turn into the same shape at seventy, and if we live a dozen years longer it is because Providence designs to make us an awful example to the young."

"I hope you do not call yourself a figure-head," said Giovanni.

"They are calling me by worse names at this very minute as they drive home. 'That old Methuselah of a Saracinesca, how has he the face to go on living?' That is the way they talk. 'People ought to die decently when other people have had enough of them, instead of sitting up at the table like death's-heads to grin

at their grandchildren and great-grandchildren!' They talk like that, Giovanni. I have known some of those old monuments for sixty years and more, since they were babies and I was of Orsino's age. Do you suppose I do not know how they talk? You always take me for a good confiding old fellow, Giovanni. But then, you never understood human nature."

Giovanni laughed and Corona smiled. Orsino turned round to enjoy the rare delight of seeing the old gentleman rouse himself in a fit of temper.

"If you were ever confiding it was because you were too good," said Giovanni affectionately.

"Yes—good and confiding—that is it! You always did agree with me as to my own faults. Is it not true, Corona? Can you not take my part against that graceless husband of yours? He is always abusing me—though I were his property, or his guest. Orsino, my boy, go away—we are all quarrelling here like a pack of wolves, and you ought to respect your elders. Here is your father calling me by bad names——"

"I said you were too good," observed Giovanni.

"Yes—good and confiding! If you can find anything worse to say, say it,—and may you live to hear that good-for-nothing Orsino call you good and confiding when you are eighty-two years old. And Corona is laughing at me. It is insufferable. You used to be a good girl, Corona—but you are so proud of having four sons that there is no possibility of talking to you any longer. It is a pity that you have not brought them up better. Look at Orsino! He is laughing too."

"Certainly not at you, grandfather," the young man hastened to say.

"Then you must be laughing at your father or your mother, or both, since there is no one else here to laugh at. You are concocting sharp speeches for your abominable tongue. I know it; I can see it in your eyes. That is the way you have brought up your

children, Giovanni. I congratulate you. Upon my word, I congratulate you with all my heart! Not that I ever expected anything better. You added your own brains with curious foreign ideas on your travels—the greater fool I for letting you run about the world when you were young. I ought to have locked you up in Saracinesca, on bread and water, until you understood the world well enough to profit by it. I wish I had.”

None of the three could help laughing at this extraordinary speech. Orsino recovered his gravity first, by the help of the historical tapestry. The old gentleman noticed the fact.

“Come here, Orsino, my boy,” he said. “I want to talk to you.”

Orsino came forward. The old prince laid a hand on his shoulder and looked up into his face.

“You are twenty-one years old to-day,” he said, “and we are all quarrelling in honour of the event. You ought to be flattered that we should take so much trouble to make the evening pass pleasantly for you, but you probably have not the discrimination to see what your amusement costs us.”

His grey beard shook a little, his rugged features twitched, and then a broad, good-humoured smile lit up the old face.

“We are quarrelsome people,” he continued in his most cheerful and hearty tone. “When Giovanni and I were young,—we were young together, you know—we quarrelled every day as regularly as we ate and drank. I believe it was very good for us. We generally made it up before night—for the sake of beginning again with a clear conscience. Anything served us—the weather, the soup, the colour of a horse.”

“You must have led an extremely lively life,” observed Orsino considerably amused.

“It was very well for us, Orsino. But it will not do for you. You are not so much like your father, as he was like me at your age. We

fought with the same weapons, but you two would not, if you fought at all. We fenced for our own amusement, and we kept the buttons on the foils. You have neither my really angelic temper nor your father’s stony coolness—he is laughing again—no matter, he knows it is true. You have a diabolical tongue. Do not quarrel with your father for amusement, Orsino. His calmness will exasperate you as it does me, but you will not laugh at the right moment as I have done all my life. You will bear malice, and grow sullen and permanently disagreeable. And do not say all the cutting things you think of, because with your disposition you will get into serious trouble. If you have really good cause for being angry, it is better to strike than to speak, and in such cases I strongly advise you to strike first. Now go and amuse yourself, for you must have had enough of our company. I do not think of any other advice to give you on your coming of age.”

Thereupon he laughed again and pushed his grandson away, evidently delighted with the lecture he had given him. Orsino was quick to profit by the permission and was soon in the Montevarchi ballroom, doing his best to forget the lugubrious feast in his own honour at which he had lately assisted.

He was not altogether successful, however. He had looked forward to the day for many months as one of rejoicing as well as of emancipation, and he had been grievously disappointed. There was something of ill augury, he thought, in the appalling dulness of the guests, for they had congratulated him upon his entry into a life exactly similar to their own. Indeed, the more precisely similar it proved to be, the more he would be respected when he reached their advanced age. The future unfolded to him was not gay. He was to live forty, fifty, or even sixty years in the same round of traditions and hampered by the same net of prejudices. He might have his romance, as his father

had had before him, but there was nothing beyond that. His father seemed perfectly satisfied with his own unruffled existence and far from desirous of any change. The feudalism of it all was still real in fact, though abolished in theory; and the old prince was as much a great feudal lord as ever, whose interests were almost tribal in their narrowness, almost sordid in their detail, and altogether uninteresting to his presumptive heir in the third generation. What was the peasant of Aquaviva, for instance, to Orsino? Yet Sant' Ilario and old Saracinesca took a lively interest in his doings and in the doings of four or five hundred of his kind, whom they knew by name and spoke of as belongings, much as they would have spoken of books in the library. To collect rents from peasants and to ascertain in person whether their houses needed repair was not a career. Orsino thought enviously of San Giacinto's two sons, leading what seemed to him a life of comparative activity and excitement in the Italian army, and having the prospect of distinction by their own merits. He thought of San Giacinto himself, of his ceaseless energy and of the great position he was building up. San Giacinto was a Saracinesca as well as Orsino, bearing the same name and perhaps not less respected than the rest by the world at large, though he had sullied his hands with finance. Even Del Ferice's position would have been above criticism, but for certain passages in his earlier life not immediately connected with his present occupation. And as if such instances were not enough there were, to Orsino's certain knowledge, half a dozen men of his father's rank even now deeply engaged in the speculations of the day. Montevarchi was one of them, and neither he nor the others made any secret of their doings.

"Surely," thought Orsino, "I have as good a head as any of them, except, perhaps, San Giacinto."

And he grew more and more dis-

contented with his lot, and more and more angry at himself for submitting to be bound hand and foot and sacrificed upon the altar of feudalism. Everything had disappointed and irritated him on that day; the weariness of the dinner, the sight of his parents' placid felicity, the advice his grandfather had given him—good of its kind, but lamentably insufficient, to say the least of it. He was rapidly approaching that state of mind in which young men do the most unexpected things for the mere pleasure of surprising their relations.

He grew tired of the ball because Madame d'Aranjuez was not there. He longed to dance with her and he wished that he were at liberty to frequent the houses to which she was asked. But as yet she saw only the Whites and had not made the acquaintance of a single Grey family, in spite of his entreaties. He could not tell whether she had any fixed reason in making her choice, or whether as yet it had been the result of chance, but he discovered that he was bored wherever he went because she was not present. At supper-time on this particular evening, he entered into a conspiracy with certain choice spirits to leave the party and adjourn to the club and cards.

The sight of the tables revived him and he drew a long breath as he sat down with a cigarette in his mouth and a glass at his elbow. It seemed as though the day were beginning at last.

Orsino was no more a born gambler than he was disposed to be a hard drinker. He loved excitement in any shape, and being so constituted as to bear it better than most men, he took it greedily in whatever form it was offered to him. He neither played nor drank every day, but when he did either he was inclined to play more than other people and to consume more strong liquor. Yet his judgment was not remarkable, nor his head much stronger than the heads of his companions. Great gamblers do

not drink and great drinkers are not good players, though they are sometimes amazingly lucky when in their cups.

It is of no use to deny the enormous influence of brandy and games of chance on the men of the present day, but there is little profit in describing such scenes as take place nightly in many clubs all over Europe. Something might be gained, indeed, if we could trace the causes which have made gambling especially the vice of our generation, for that discovery might show us some means of influencing the next. But I do not believe that this is possible. The times have undoubtedly grown more dull as civilisation has made them more alike, but there is, I think, no truth in the common statement that vice is bred of idleness. The really idle man is a poor creature, incapable of strong sins. It is far more often the man of superior gifts, with faculties overwrought and nerves strained above concert pitch by excessive mental exertion, who turns to vicious excitement for the sake of rest, as a duller man falls asleep. Men whose lives are spent amidst the vicissitudes, surprises, and disappointments of the money-market are assuredly less idle than country gentlemen; the busy lawyer has less time to spare than the equally gifted fellow of a college; the skilled mechanic works infinitely harder, taking the average of the whole year, than the agricultural labourer; the life of a sailor on an ordinary merchant-ship is one of rest, ease, and safety compared with that of the collier. Yet there can hardly be a doubt as to which individual in each example is the one to seek relaxation in excitement, innocent or the reverse, instead of in sleep. The operator in the stock-market, the barrister, the mechanic, the miner, in every case the men whose faculties are the more severely strained, are those who seek strong emotions in their daily leisure, and who are the more inclined to extend that leisure at the expense of bodily

rest. It may be objected that the worst vice is found in the highest grades of society, that is to say, among men who have no settled occupation. I answer that, in the first place, this is not a known fact, but a matter of speculation; and that the conclusion is principally drawn from the circumstance that the evil deeds of such persons, when they become known, are very severely criticised by those whose criticism has the most weight, namely, by the equals of the sinners in question,—as well as by writers of fiction whose opinions may or may not be worth considering. For one Zola, historian of the Rougon-Macquart family, there are a hundred would-be Zolas, censors of a higher class, less unpleasantly fond of accurate detail, perhaps, but as merciless in intention. But even if the case against society be proved, which is possible, I do not think that society can truly be called idle because many of those who compose it have no settled occupation. The social day is a long one. Society would not accept the eight hours' system demanded by the labour-unions. Society not uncommonly works at a high pressure for twelve, fourteen, and even sixteen hours at a stretch. The mental strain, though not of the most intellectual order, is incomparably more severe than that required for success in many lucrative professions or crafts. The general absence of a distinct aim sharpens the faculties in the keen pursuit of details, and lends an importance to trifles which overburdens at every turn the responsibility borne by the nerves. Lazy people are not favourites in drawing-rooms, and still less at the dinner-table. Consider also that the average man of the world, and many women, daily sustain an amount of bodily fatigue equal perhaps to that borne by many mechanics and craftsmen and much greater than that required in the liberal professions, and that, too, under far less favourable conditions. Recapitulate all these points. Add together the

physical effort, the mental activity, the nervous strain. Take the sum and compare it with that got by a similar process from other conditions of existence. I think there can be little doubt of the verdict. The force exerted is wasted, if you please, but it is enormously great, and more than sufficient to prove that those who daily exert it are by no means idle. Besides, none of the inevitable outward and visible results of idleness are apparent in the ordinary man or woman of society. On the contrary, most of them exhibit the peculiar and unmistakable signs of physical exhaustion, chief of which is cerebral anaemia. They are over-trained and overworked; in the language of training they are "stale."

Men like Orsino Saracinesca are not vicious at his age, though they may become so. Vice begins when the excitement ceases to be a matter of taste and turns into a necessity. Orsino gambled because it amused him when no other amusement was obtainable, and he drank while he played because it made the amusement seem more amusing. He was far too young and healthy and strong to feel an irresistible longing for anything not natural.

On the present occasion he cared very little, at first, whether he won or lost, and as often happens to a man in that mood he won a considerable sum during the first hour. The sight of the notes before him strengthened an idea which had crossed his mind more than once of late, and the stimulants he drank suddenly fixed it into a purpose. It was true that he did not command any sum of money which could be dignified by the name of capital, but he generally had enough in his pocket to play with, and to-night he had rather more than usual. It struck him that if he could win a few thousands by a run of luck, he would have more than enough to try his fortune in the building-speculations of which Del Ferice had talked. The scheme took shape and at once lent a passionate interest to his play.

Orsino had no system and generally left everything to chance, but he had no sooner determined that he must win than he improvised a method, and began to play carefully. Of course he lost, and as he saw his heap of notes diminishing, he filled his glass more and more often. By two o'clock he had but five hundred francs left, his face was deadly pale, the lights dazzled him, and his hands moved uncertainly. He held the bank and he knew that if he lost on the card he must borrow money, which he did not wish to do.

He dealt himself a five of spades, and glanced at the stakes. They were considerable. A last sensation of caution prevented him from taking another card. The table turned up a six and he lost.

"Lend me some money, Filippo," he said to the man nearest him, who immediately counted out a number of notes.

Orsino paid with the money and the bank passed. He emptied his glass and lit a cigarette. At each succeeding deal he staked a small sum and lost it, till the bank came to him again. Once more he held a five. The other men saw that he was losing and put up all they could. Orsino hesitated. Some one observed justly that he probably held a five again. The lights swam indistinctly before him and he drew another card. It was a four. Orsino laughed nervously as he gathered the notes and paid back what he had borrowed.

He did not remember clearly what happened afterwards. The faces of the cards grew less distinct and the lights more dazzling. He played blindly and won almost without interruption until the other men dropped off one by one, having lost as much as they cared to part with at one sitting. At four o'clock in the morning Orsino went home in a cab, having about fifteen thousand francs in his pockets. The men he had played with were mostly young fellows like himself, having a limited allowance of

pocket-money, and Orsino's winnings were very large in the circumstances.

The night air cooled his head and he laughed gaily to himself as he drove through the deserted streets. His hand was steady enough now, and the gas lamps did not move disagreeably before his eyes. But he had reached the stage of excitement in which a fixed idea takes hold of the brain, and if it had been possible he would undoubtedly have gone as he was, in evening dress with his winnings in his pocket, to rouse Del Ferice, or San Giacinto, or any one else who could put him in the way of risking his money on a building-lot. He reluctantly resigned himself to the necessity of going to bed, and slept as one sleeps at twenty-one until nearly eleven o'clock on the following morning.

While he dressed he recalled the circumstances of the previous night and was surprised to find that his idea was as fixed as ever. He counted the money. There was five times as much as the Del Ferice's carpenter, tobacco-nist, and mason had been able to scrape together among them. He had therefore, according to his simple calculation, just five times as good a chance of succeeding as they. And they had been successful. His plan fascinated him, and he looked forward to the constant interest and occupation with a delight which was creditable to his character. He would be busy, and the magic word "business" rang in his ears. It was speculation, no doubt, but he did not look upon it as a form of gambling; if he had done so, he would not have cared for it on two consecutive days. It was something much better in his eyes. It was to do something, to be some one, to strike out of the everlastingly dull road which lay before him and which ended in the vanishing point of an insignificant old age.

He had not the very faintest conception of what that business was with which he aspired to occupy himself. He was totally ignorant of the methods of dealing with money, and

he no more knew what a draft at three months meant than he could have explained the construction of the watch he carried in his pocket. Of the first principles of building he knew, if possible, even less, and he did not know whether land in the city were worth a franc or a thousand francs by the square foot. But he said to himself that those things were mere details, and that he could learn all he needed of them in a fortnight. Courage and judgment, Del Ferice had said, were the chief requisites for success. Courage he possessed, and he believed himself cool. He would avail himself of the judgment of others until he could judge for himself.

He knew very well what his father would think of the whole plan, but he had no intention of concealing his project. Since yesterday he was of age and was therefore his own master to the extent of his own small resources. His father had not the power to keep him from entering upon any honourable undertaking, though he might justly refuse to be responsible for the consequences. At the worst, thought Orsino, those consequences might be the loss of the money he had in hand. Since he had nothing else to risk, he had nothing else to lose. That is the light in which most inexperienced people regard speculation. Orsino therefore went to his father and unfolded his scheme, without mentioning Del Ferice.

Sant' Ilario listened rather impatiently and laughed when Orsino had finished. He did not mean to be unkind, and if he had dreamed of the effect his manner would produce, he would have been more careful. But he did not understand his son, as he himself had been understood by his own father.

"This is all nonsense, my boy," he answered. "It is a mere passing fancy. What do you know of business or architecture, or of a dozen other matters which you ought to understand thoroughly before attempting anything like what you propose?"

Orsino was silent, and looked out of the window, though he was evidently listening.

"You say you want an occupation. This is not one. Banking is an occupation, and architecture is a career, but what we call affairs in Rome are neither one nor the other. If you want to be a banker you must go into a bank and do clerk's work for years. If you mean to follow architecture as a profession you must spend four or five years in study at the very least."

"San Giacinto has not done that," observed Orsino coldly.

"San Giacinto has a very much better head on his shoulders than you, or I, or almost any other man in Rome. He has known how to make use of other men's talents, and he had a rather more practical education than I would have cared to give you. If he were not one of the most honest men alive he would certainly have turned out one of the greatest scoundrels."

"I do not see what that has to do with it," said Orsino.

"Not much, I confess. But his early life made him understand men as you and I cannot understand them, and need not, for that matter."

"Then you object to my trying this?"

"I do nothing of the kind. When I object to the doing of anything I prevent it by fair words or by force. I am not inclined for a pitched battle with you, Orsino, and I might not get the better of you after all. I will be perfectly neutral. I will have nothing to do with this business. If I believed in it, I would give you all the capital you could need, but I shall not diminish your allowance in order to hinder you from throwing it away. If you want more money for your amusements or luxuries, say so. I am not fond of counting small expenses, and I have not brought you up to count them either. Do not gamble at cards any more than you can help, but if you lose and must borrow, borrow of me. When I think you are going too far,

I will tell you so. But do not count upon me for any help in this scheme of yours. You will not get it. If you find yourself in a commercial scrape, find your own way out of it. If you want better advice than mine, go to San Giacinto. He will give you a practical man's view of the case."

"You are frank, at all events," said Orsino, turning from the window and facing his father.

"Most of us are in this house," answered Sant' Ilario. "That will make it all the harder for you to deal with the scoundrels who call themselves men of business."

"I mean to try this, father," said the young man. "I will go and see San Giacinto, as you suggest, and I will ask his opinion. But if he discourages me I will try my luck all the same. I cannot lead this life any longer. I want an occupation, and I will make one for myself."

"It is not an occupation that you want, Orsino. It is another excitement. That is all. If you want an occupation, study, learn something, find out what work means. Or go to Saracinesca and build houses for the peasants; you will do no harm there, at all events. Go and drain that land in Lombardy; I can do nothing with it and would sell it if I could. But that is not what you want. You want an excitement for the hours of the morning. Very well. You will probably find more of it than you like. Try it; that is all I have to say."

Like many very just men Giovanni could state a case with alarming unfairness when thoroughly convinced that he was right. Orsino stood still for a moment and then walked towards the door without another word. His father called him back.

"What is it?" asked Orsino coldly.

Sant' Ilario held out his hand with a kindly look in his eyes.

"I do not want you to think that I am angry, my boy. There is to be no ill feeling between us about this?"

"None whatever," said the young man, though without much alacrity

as he shook hands with his father. "I see you are not angry. You do not understand me, that is all."

He went out, more disappointed with the result of the interview than he had expected, though he had not looked forward to receiving any encouragement. He had known very well what his father's views were, but he had not foreseen that he would be so much irritated by the expression of them. His determination hardened, and he resolved that nothing should hinder him. But he was both willing and ready to consult San Giacinto, and went to the latter's house immediately on leaving Sant' Ilario's study.

As for Giovanni, he was dimly conscious that he had made a mistake, though he did not care to acknowledge it. He was a good horseman, and he was aware that he would have used a very different method with a restive colt. But few men are wise enough to see that there is only one universal principle to follow in the exertion of strength, moral or physical; and instead of seeking analogies out of actions familiar to them as a means of accomplishing the unfamiliar, they try to discover new theories of motion at every turn, and are led farther and farther from the right line by their own desire to reach the end quickly.

"At all events," thought Sant' Ilario, "the boy's new hobby will take him to places where he is not likely to meet that woman."

And with this discourteous reflection upon Madame d'Aranjuez he consoled himself. He did not think it necessary to tell Corona of Orsino's intentions, simply because he did not believe that they would lead to anything serious, and there was no use in disturbing her unnecessarily with visions of future annoyance. If Orsino chose to speak of it to her, he was at liberty to do so.

CHAPTER X.

ORSINO went directly to San Giacinto's house, and found him in the room which he used for working, and

in which he received the many persons whom he was often obliged to see on business. The giant was alone and was seated behind a broad polished table, occupied in writing. Orsino was struck by the extremely orderly arrangement of everything he saw. Papers were tied together in bundles of exactly like shape, which lay in two lines of mathematical precision. The big inkstand was just in the middle of the rows, and a paper-cutter, a pen-rack, and an erasing-knife lay side by side in front of it. The walls were lined with low book-cases of a heavy and severe type, filled principally with documents neatly filed in volumes and marked on the back in San Giacinto's clear handwriting. The only object of beauty in the room was a full-length portrait of Flavia by a great artist, which hung above the fireplace. The rigid symmetry of everything was made imposing by the size of the objects—the table was larger than ordinary tables, the easy-chairs were deeper, broader, and lower than common, the inkstand was bigger, even the penholder in San Giacinto's fingers was longer and thicker than any Orsino had ever seen. And yet the latter felt that there was no affectation about all this. The man to whom these things belonged, and who used them daily, was himself created on a scale larger than other men.

Though he was older than Sant' Ilario, and was, in fact, not far from sixty years of age, San Giacinto might easily have passed for less than fifty. There was hardly a grey thread in his short, thick, black hair, and he was still as lean and strong, and almost as active, as he had been thirty years earlier. The large features were perhaps a little more bony, and the eyes somewhat deeper than they had been, but these changes lent an air of dignity rather than of age to the face.

He rose to meet Orsino, and then made him sit down beside the table. The young man suddenly felt an unaccountable sense of inferiority, and hesitated as to how he should begin.

"I suppose you want to consult me about something," said San Giacinto quietly.

"Yes. I want to ask your advice, if you will give it to me, about a matter of business."

"Willingly. What is it?"

Orsino was silent for a moment and stared at the wall. He was conscious that the very small sum of which he could dispose must seem even smaller in the eyes of such a man, but this did not disturb him. He was oppressed by San Giacinto's personality, and prepared himself to speak as though he had been a student undergoing oral examination. He stated his case plainly, when he at last spoke. He was of age, and he looked forward with dread to an idle life. All careers were closed to him. He had fifteen thousand francs in his pocket. Could San Giacinto help him to occupy himself by investing the sum in a building speculation? Was the sum sufficient as a beginning? Those were the questions.

San Giacinto did not laugh as Sant' Ilario had done. He listened very attentively to the end, and then deliberately offered Orsino a cigar and lit one himself before he delivered his answer.

"You are asking the same question that is put to me very often," he said at last. "I wish I could give you any encouragement. I cannot."

Orsino's face fell, for the reply was categorical. He drew back a little in his chair, but said nothing.

"That is my answer," continued San Giacinto thoughtfully, "but when one says 'no' to another, the subject is not necessarily exhausted. On the contrary, in such a case as this I cannot let you go without giving you my reasons. I do not care to give my views to the public, but such as they are, you are welcome to them. The time is past. That is why I advise you to have nothing to do with any speculation of this kind. That is the best of all reasons."

"But you yourself are still en-

gaged in this business," objected Orsino.

"Not so deeply as you fancy. I have sold almost everything which I do not consider a certainty, and am selling what little I still have as fast as I can. In speculation there are only two important moments,—the moment to buy and the moment to sell. In my opinion this is the time to sell, and I do not think that the time for buying will come again without a crisis."

"But everything is in such a flourishing state——"

"No doubt it is,—to-day. But no one can tell what state business will be in next week, nor even to-morrow."

"There is Del Ferice——"

"No doubt, and a score like him," answered San Giacinto, looking quietly at Orsino. "Del Ferice is a banker, and I am a speculator, as you wish to be. His position is different from ours. It is better to leave him out of the question. Let us look at the matter logically. You wish to speculate——"

"Excuse me," said Orsino, interrupting him. "I want to try what I can do in business."

"You wish to risk money, in one way or another. You therefore wish one or more of three things,—money for its own sake, excitement, or occupation. I can hardly suppose that you want money. Eliminate that. Excitement is not a legitimate aim, and you can get it more safely in other ways. Therefore you want occupation."

"That is precisely what I said at the beginning," observed Orsino with a shade of irritation.

"Yes. But I like to reach my conclusions in my own way. You are, then, a young man in search of an occupation. Speculation, and what you propose is nothing else, is no more an occupation than playing at the public lottery, and much less one than playing at *baccarat*. There at least you are responsible for your own

mistakes, and in decent society you are safe from the machinations of dishonest people. That would matter less if the chances were in your favour, as they might have been a year ago and as they were in mine from the beginning. They are against you now, because it is too late, and they are against me. I would as soon buy a piece of land on credit at the present moment, as give the whole sum in cash to the first man I met in the street."

"Yet there is Montevarchi who still buys——"

"Montevarchi is not worth the paper on which he signs his name," said San Giacinto calmly.

Orsino uttered an exclamation of surprise and incredulity. "You may tell him so, if you please," answered the giant with perfect indifference. "If you tell any one what I have said, please to tell him first, that is all. He will not believe you. But in six months he will know it, I fancy, as well as I know it now. He might have doubled his fortune, but he was and is totally ignorant of business. He thought it enough to invest all he could lay hands on and that the returns would be sure. He has invested forty millions, and owns property which he believes to be worth sixty, but which will not bring ten in six months, and those remaining ten millions he owes on all manner of paper, on mortgages on his original property, in a dozen ways which he has forgotten himself."

"I do not see how that is possible!" exclaimed Orsino.

"I am a plain man, Orsino, and I am your cousin. You may take it for granted that I am right. Do not forget that I was brought up in a hand-to-hand struggle for fortune such as you cannot dream of. When I was your age I was a practical man of business, and I had taught myself, and it was all on such a small scale that a mistake of a hundred francs made the difference between profit and loss. I dislike details, but I have been a man of detail all my

life by force of circumstances. Successful business implies the comprehension of details. It is tedious work, and if you mean to try it you must begin at the beginning. You ought to do so. There is an enormous business before you with considerable capabilities in it. If I were in your place, I would take what fell naturally to my lot."

"What is that?"

"Farming. They call it agriculture in Parliament, because they do not know what farming means. The men who think that Italy can live without farmers are fools. We are not a manufacturing people any more than we are a business people. The best dictator for us would be a practical farmer, a ploughman like Cincinnatus. Nobody who has not tried to raise wheat on an Italian mountain-side knows the great difficulties or the great possibilities of our country. Do you know that bad as our farming is, and absurd as is our system of land-taxation, we are food-exporters to a small extent? The beginning is there. Take my advice: be a farmer. Manage one of the big estates you have among you for five or six years. You will not do much good to the land in that time, but you will learn what land really means. Then go into Parliament and tell people facts. That is an occupation and a career as well, which cannot be said of speculation in building-lots, large or small. If you have any ready money keep it in government bonds until you have a chance of buying something worth keeping."

Orsino went away disappointed and annoyed. San Giacinto's talk about farming seemed very dull to him. To bury himself for half-a-dozen years in the country in order to learn the rotation of crops and the principles of land-draining did not present itself as an attractive career. If San Giacinto thought farming the great profession of the future, why did he not try it himself? Orsino dismissed the idea rather indignantly, and his determination to try his luck became stronger

by the opposition it met. Moreover, he had expected very different language from San Giacinto, whose sober view jarred on Orsino's enthusiastic impulse.

But he now found himself in considerable difficulty. He was ignorant even of the first steps to be taken, and knew no one to whom he could apply for information. There was Prince Montevarchi, indeed, who, though he was San Giacinto's brother-in-law, seemed by the latter's account to have got into trouble. He did not understand how San Giacinto could allow his wife's brother to ruin himself without lending him a helping hand, but San Giacinto was not the kind of man of whom people ask indiscreet questions, and Orsino had heard that the two men were not on the best of terms. Possibly good advice had been offered and refused. Such affairs generally end in a breach of friendship. However that might be, Orsino would not go to Montevarchi.

He wandered aimlessly about the streets, and the money seemed to burn in his pocket, though he had carefully deposited it in a place of safety at home. Again and again Del Ferice's story of the carpenter and his two companions recurred to his mind. He wondered how they had set about beginning, and he wished he could ask Del Ferice himself. He could not go to the man's house, but he might possibly meet him at Maria Consuelo's. He was surprised to find that he had almost forgotten her in his anxiety to become a man of business. It was too early to call yet, and in order to kill the time he went home, got a horse from the stables, and rode out into the country for a couple of hours.

At half-past five o'clock he entered the familiar little sitting-room in the hotel. Madame d'Aranjuez was alone, cutting a new book with the jewelled knife which continued to be the only object of the kind visible in the room. She smiled as Orsino entered, and she

laid aside the volume as he sat down in his accustomed place.

"I thought you were not coming," she said.

"Why?"

"You always come at five. It is half-past to-day."

Orsino looked at his watch.

"Do you notice whether I come or not?" he asked.

Maria Consuelo glanced at his face, and laughed. "What have you been doing to-day?" she asked. "That is much more interesting."

"Is it? I am afraid not. I have been listening to those disagreeable things which are called truths by the people who say them. I have listened to two lectures delivered by two very intelligent men for my especial benefit. It seems to me that as soon as I make a good resolution it becomes the duty of sensible people to demonstrate that I am a fool."

"You are not in a good humour. Tell me all about it."

"And weary you with my grievances? No. Is Del Ferice coming this afternoon?"

"How can I tell? He does not come often."

"I thought he came almost every day," said Orsino gloomily.

He was disappointed, but Maria Consuelo did not understand what was the matter. She leaned forward in her low seat, her chin resting upon one hand, and her tawny eyes fixed on Orsino's.

"Tell me, my friend—are you unhappy? Can I do anything? Will you tell me?"

It was not easy to resist the appeal. Though the two had grown intimate of late, there had hitherto always been something cold and reserved behind her outwardly friendly manner. To-day she seemed suddenly willing to be different. Her easy, graceful attitude, her soft voice full of promised sympathy, above all the look in her strange eyes revealed a side of her character which Orsino had not suspected, and which affected him

in a way he could not have described.

Without hesitation he told her his story from beginning to end, simply, without comment, and without any of the cutting phrases which came so readily to his tongue on most occasions. She listened very thoughtfully to the end.

"Those things are not misfortunes," she said. "But they may be the beginnings of unhappiness. To be unhappy is worse than any misfortune. What right has your father to laugh at you? Because he never needed to do anything for himself, he thinks it absurd that his son should dislike the lazy life that is prepared for him. It is not reasonable,—it is not kind!"

"Yet he means to be both, I suppose," said Orsino bitterly.

"Oh, of course! People always mean to be the soul of logic and the paragon of charity! Especially where their own children are concerned."

Maria Consuelo added the last words with more feeling than seemed justified by her sympathy for Orsino's woes. The moment was perhaps favourable for asking a leading question about herself, and her answer might have thrown light on her problematic past. But Orsino was too busy with his own troubles to think of that, and the opportunity slipped by and was lost.

"You know now why I want to see Del Ferice," he said. "I cannot go to his house. My only chance of talking to him lies here."

"And that is what brings you? You are very flattering!"

"Do not be unjust! We all look forward to meeting our friends in heaven."

"Very pretty! I forgive you. But I am afraid that you will not meet Del Ferice. I do not think he has left the Chambers yet. There was to be a debate this afternoon in which he had to speak."

"Does he make speeches?"

"Very good ones; I have heard him."

"I have never been inside the Chambers," observed Orsino.

"You are not very patriotic. You might go there and ask for Del Ferice. You could see him without going to his house, without compromising your dignity."

"Why do you laugh?"

"Because it all seems to me so absurd. You know that you are perfectly free to go and see him when and where you will. There is nothing to prevent you. He is the one man of all others whose advice you need. He has an unexceptionable position in the world,—no doubt he has done strange things, but so have dozens of people whom you know—his present reputation is excellent, I say. And yet, because some twenty years ago, when you were a child, he held one opinion and your father held another, you are interdicted from crossing his threshold! If you can shake hands with him here, you can take his hand in his own house. Is not that true?"

"Theoretically, I dare say, but not in practice. You see it yourself. You have chosen one side from the first, and all the people on the other side know it. As a foreigner you are not bound to either, and you can know everybody in time, if you please. Society is not so prejudiced as to object to that. But because you begin with the Del Ferice in a very uncompromising way, it would take a long time for you to know the Montevarchi, for instance."

"Who told you that I was a foreigner?" asked Maria Consuelo, rather abruptly.

"You yourself——"

"That is good authority!" She laughed. "I do not remember—ah! because I do not speak Italian? You mean that? One may forget one's own language, or for that matter one may never have learned it."

"Are you Italian, then, madame?" asked Orsino, surprised that she should lead the conversation so directly to a point which he had supposed must be reached by a series of tactful approaches.

"Who knows? I am sure I do not,

My father was Italian. Does that constitute nationality?"

"Yes. But the woman takes the nationality of her husband, I believe," said Orsino, anxious to hear more.

"Ah, yes,—poor Aranjuez!" Maria Consuelo's voice suddenly took that sleepy tone which Orsino had heard more than once. Her eyelids drooped a little and she lazily opened and shut her hand, and spread out the fingers and looked at them.

But Orsino was not satisfied to let the conversation drop at this point, and after a moment's pause he put a decisive question.

"And was Monsieur d'Aranjuez also Italian?" he asked.

"What does it matter?" she asked in the same indolent tone. "Yes, since you ask me, he was Italian, poor man."

Orsino was more and more puzzled. That the name did not exist in Italy he was almost convinced. He thought of the story of the Signor Aragno, who had fallen overboard in the south seas, and then he was suddenly aware that he could not believe in anything of the sort. Maria Consuelo did not betray a shade of emotion, either, at the mention of her deceased husband. She seemed absorbed in the contemplation of her hands. Orsino had not been rebuked for his curiosity, and would have asked another question if he had known how to frame it. An awkward silence followed. Maria Consuelo raised her eyes slowly and looked thoughtfully into Orsino's face.

"I see," she said at last. "You are curious. I do not know whether you have any right to be—have you?"

"I wish I had!" exclaimed Orsino thoughtlessly.

Again she looked at him in silence for some moments.

"I have not known you long enough," she said. "And if I had known you longer, perhaps it would not be different. Are other people curious, too? Do they talk about me?"

"The people I know do; but they do not know you. They see your name in the papers, as a beautiful Spanish princess. Yet everybody is aware that there is no Spanish nobleman of your name. Of course they are curious. They invent stories about you, which I deny. If I knew more, it would be easier."

"Why do you take the trouble to deny such things?"

She asked the question with a change of manner. Once more she leaned forward and her face softened wonderfully as she looked at him.

"Can you not guess?" he asked.

He was conscious of a very unusual emotion, not at all in harmony with the imaginary character he had chosen for himself and which he generally maintained with considerable success. Maria Consuelo was one person when she leaned back in her chair, laughing or idly listening to his talk, or repulsing the insignificant declarations of devotion which were not even meant to be taken altogether in earnest. She was pretty then, attractive, graceful, feminine, a little artificial, perhaps, and Orsino felt that he was free to like her or not, as he pleased, but that he pleased to like her for the present. She was quite another woman to-day, as she bent forward, her tawny eyes growing darker and more mysterious every moment, her auburn hair casting wonderful shadows upon her broad pale forehead, her lips not closed as usual, but slightly parted, her fragrant breath just stirring the quiet air Orsino breathed. Her features might be irregular. It did not matter. She was beautiful for the moment with a kind of beauty Orsino had never seen, and which produced a sudden and overwhelming effect upon him.

"Do you not know?" he asked again, and his voice trembled unexpectedly.

"Thank you," she said softly, and she touched his hand almost caressingly.

But when he would have taken it, she drew back instantly and was once

more the woman whom he saw every day, careless, indifferent, pretty.

"Why do you change so quickly?" he asked in a low voice, bending towards her. "Why do you snatch your hand away? Are you afraid of me?"

"Why should I be afraid? Are you dangerous?"

"You are. You may be fatal, for all I know."

"How foolish!" she exclaimed, with a quick glance.

"You are Madame d'Aranjuez, now," he answered. "We had better change the subject."

"What do you mean?"

"A moment ago you were Consuelo," he said boldly.

"Have I given you any right to say that?"

"A little."

"I am sorry. I will be more careful. I am sure I cannot imagine why you should think of me at all, unless when you are talking to me, and then I do not wish to be called by my Christian name. I assure you, you are never anything in my thoughts but His Excellency Prince Orsino Saracinesca, with as many titles after that as may belong to you."

"I have none," said Orsino.

Her speech irritated him strongly, and the illusion which had been so powerful a few moments earlier all but disappeared.

"Then you advise me to go and find Del Ferice at Monte Citorio," he observed.

"If you like." She laughed. "There is no mistaking your intention when you mean to change the subject," she added.

"You made it sufficiently clear that the other was disagreeable to you."

"I did not mean to do so."

"Then, in heaven's name, what do you mean, madame?" he asked, suddenly losing his head in his extreme annoyance.

Maria Consuelo raised her eyebrows in surprise. "Why are you so angry?" she asked. "Do you know that it is very rude to speak like that?"

"I cannot help it. What have I done to-day that you should torment me as you do?"

"I? I torment you? My dear friend, you are quite mad."

"I know I am. You make me so."

"Will you tell me how? What have I done? What have I said? You Romans are certainly the most extraordinary people. It is impossible to please you. If one laughs, you become tragic! If one is serious, you grow gay! I wish I understood you better."

"You will end by making it impossible for me to understand myself," said Orsino. "You say that I am changeable. Then what are you?"

"Very much the same to-day as yesterday," said Maria Consuelo calmly. "And I do not suppose that I shall be very different to-morrow."

"At least I will take my chance of finding that you are mistaken," said Orsino, rising suddenly and standing before her.

"Are you going?" she asked, as though she were surprised.

"Since I cannot please you."

"Since you will not."

"I do not know how."

"Be yourself, the same that you always are. You are affecting to be some one else to-day."

"I fancy it is the other way," answered Orsino, with more truth than he really owned to himself.

"Then I prefer the affectation to the reality."

"As you will, madame. Good evening."

He crossed the room to go out. She called him back.

"Don Orsino!"

He turned sharply round.

"Madame?"

Seeing that he did not move, she rose and went to him. He looked down into her face and saw that it was changed again.

"Are you really angry?" she asked. There was something girlish in the way she asked the question, and, for a moment, in her whole manner.

Orsino could not help smiling. But he said nothing.

"No, you are not," she continued. "I can see it. Do you know, I am very glad? It was foolish of me to tease you. You will forgive me? This once?"

"If you will give me warning the next time." He found that he was looking into her eyes.

"What is the use of warning?" she asked.

They were very close together, and there was a moment's silence. Suddenly Orsino forgot everything and bent down, clasping her in his arms and kissing her again and again. It was brutal, rough, senseless, but he could not help it.

Maria Consuelo uttered a short, sharp cry, more of surprise, perhaps, than of horror. To Orsino's amazement and confusion her voice was immediately answered by another, which was that of the dark and usually silent maid whom he had seen once or twice. The woman ran into the room, terrified by the cry she had heard.

"Madame felt faint in crossing the room, and was falling when I caught her," said Orsino, with a coolness that did him credit.

And, in fact, Maria Consuelo closed her eyes as he let her sink into the nearest chair. The maid fell on her knees beside her mistress and began chafing her hands.

"The poor Signora!" she exclaimed. "She should never be left alone! She has not been herself since the poor Signore died. You had better leave us, sir; I will put her to bed when she revives. It often happens, — pray do not be anxious!"

Orsino picked up his hat and left the room.

"Oh, it often happens, does it?" he said to himself as he closed the door softly behind him and walked down the corridor of the hotel.

He was more amazed at his own boldness than he cared to own. He had not supposed that scenes of this description produced themselves so

very unexpectedly, and, as it were, without any fixed intention on the part of the chief actor. He remembered that he had been very angry with Madame d'Aranjuez, that she had spoken half a dozen words, and that he had felt an irresistible impulse to kiss her. He had done so, and he thought with considerable trepidation of their next meeting. She had screamed, which showed that she was outraged by his boldness. It was doubtful whether she would receive him again. The best thing to be done, he thought, was to write her a very humble letter of apology, explaining his conduct as best he could. This did not accord very well with his principles, but he had already transgressed them in being so excessively hasty. Her eyes had certainly been provoking in the extreme, and it had been impossible to resist the expression on her lips. But at all events, he should have begun by kissing her hand, which she would certainly not have withdrawn again; then he might have put his arm round her and drawn her head to his shoulder. These were preliminaries in the matter of kissing which it was undoubtedly right to observe, and he had culpably neglected them. He had been abominably brutal, and he ought to apologise. Nevertheless, he would not have forfeited the recollection of that moment for all the other recollections of his life, and he knew it. As he walked along the street he felt a wild exhilaration such as he had never known before. He owned gladly to himself that he loved Maria Consuelo, and resolutely thrust away the idea that his boyish vanity was pleased by the snatching of a kiss.

Whatever the real nature of his delight might be it was for the time so sincere that he even forgot to light a cigarette in order to think over the circumstances.

Walking rapidly up the Corso he came to Piazza Colonna, and the glare of the electric light somehow recalled him to himself.

"Great speech of the Honourable Del Ferice!" yelled a newsboy in his ear. "Ministerial crisis! Horrible murder of a grocer!"

Orsino mechanically turned to the right in the direction of the Chambers. Del Ferice had probably gone home, since his speech was already in print. But fate had ordained otherwise. Del Ferice had corrected his proofs on the spot and had lingered to talk with his friends before going home. Not that it mattered much, for Orsino could have found him as well on the following day. His brougham was standing in front of the great entrance and he himself was shaking hands with a tall man under the light of the lamps. Orsino went up to him.

"Could you spare me a quarter of an hour?" asked the young man in a voice constrained by excitement. He felt that he was embarked at last upon his great enterprise.

Del Ferice looked up in some aston-

ishment. He had reason to dread the quarrelsome disposition of the Saracinesca as a family, and he wondered what Orsino wanted.

"Certainly, certainly, Don Orsino," he answered, with a particularly bland smile. "Shall we drive, or at least sit in my carriage? I am a little fatigued with my exertions to-day."

The tall man bowed and strolled away, biting the end of an unlit cigar.

"It is a matter of business," said Orsino, before entering the carriage. "Can you help me to try my luck,—in a very small way—in one of the building-enterprises you manage?"

"Of course I can, and will," answered Del Ferice, more and more astonished. "After you, my dear Don Orsino, after you," he repeated, pushing the young man into the brougham. "Quiet streets, till I stop you," he said to the footman, as he himself got in.

(To be continued.)

VILLAGE LIFE.

THE approach of a General Election, a potent factor in which will be the votes of agricultural labourers, has awakened unusual interest in their fortunes. Politicians vie with each other in holding out tempting baits to the labourer. The most urgent need of modern policy, they explain, is the improvement of his condition, his emancipation from the tyranny of squire and parson and from the dull monotony of a life of toil without amusement and without hope. With a zeal not always according to knowledge the Press takes up the cry. Special Commissioners,—sharp, clever penmen in populous cities pent—are sent post-haste to scour rural England, and report in a series of telling articles upon its condition, its people, its habits and ways of thought, its aspirations, its possibilities. A few cross-country drives with communicative ostlers, a few gossips with old women at cottage doors, with labourers at the village inn, or with Radical cobblers over their work; and your smart newspaper-man knows all about it. He gets to the bottom of things at once. We who live in the country and know something about the English labourer,—the slow movement of his ideas, his extreme reticence if questioned, and his invariable suspiciousness of strangers—are astonished at the facility with which the correspondent has “tapped” him. We marvel how cocksuck the said correspondent is upon points which after years of experience are not clear to us. Still more do we marvel at the utterances of politicians,—even men “of light and leading”—upon village life as seen through political spectacles. When men of Cabinet rank see visions of fields, now deserted, “waving with golden grain” if their

party returns to power, or of labourers happy, contented, and hopeful under the fairy gift of Village Councils, we ask in amazement, Do they know that they are talking nonsense? or are they deliberately trying how much the public will swallow? And when men who know little or nothing of country life and have never lived among us,—men whose whole interests have till only the other day lain far away from Hodge and his fortunes—unblushingly tell us that their one desire is to do him justice (for the trifling consideration of his vote), we remember “Three acres and a cow,” and wonder by what false or foolish hopes our labouring friends are now to be beguiled in their longing for improvement.

Improvement? Yes, I know there is great need of it. I am no optimist who thinks that our labourers are as well off as they ought to be and might be, and that all is for the best under the best possible social arrangements. I know that the labourer's life wants prospect, variety, and hope; and that in too many cases it is a dreary vista of toil ending in the workhouse. I know the sterling qualities of the English labourer: his shrewd commonsense, his native courtesy (when not spoilt by agitators), his patient endurance; and I rejoice to see those qualities rewarded (as they are much oftener than might be supposed) by a rise in life and by a position of independence. And it is precisely because I recognise that his position needs improvement and wish that he should improve it, that I do not regard the depopulation of our villages, of which some speak as if it were an evil to be remedied at all costs, as an unmixed disadvantage. So far as it means that the refuse of the agricultural popula-

tion crowd into towns only to swell the ranks of the unemployed and provide material for Mr. Booth's experiments, it is no doubt an evil for society in general, if not for the villages which thus get rid of superfluous encumbrances. If it means desertion of the land by those whose labour is necessary for cultivation, it is an evil for the villages themselves and for agriculture. But so far as it means that the best and most energetic young men, who have stuff in them and capacity for getting on, are taking their labour to more profitable markets, it is surely a satisfactory sign that there are other openings for the labourer who is fit to fill them, and that a man who has it in him to be something better than a farm-hand need not remain bound to the soil. One is sorry, no doubt, to see the pick of our young men going off to the railway, or the police-force, or to shops, or into the army; but can we blame them? Can we wish to keep them? They have seen perhaps in neighbouring cottages, on the one hand a pensioner from the army or the police, or a retired servant from some London business, spending the evening of life in comfortable independence, and on the other an elderly labourer getting past his work and slowly drifting into pauperism. That is an object-lesson that speaks for itself to a young fellow with any heart in him; and it is only because many young men of the labouring class have so little of that quality, and so little capacity for sticking to anything, that they remain at home at all.

The assumption that depopulation of villages is an evil urgently needing remedy must thus, as it seems, be taken with some qualification; and so too must be the assumption underlying much that is said or written about the agricultural labourer, that he is prevented from rising by adverse social circumstances. To listen to some people, one might suppose that, if the squire and the parson could be got rid of, the labourer would rise like a cork

to comfort and independence. But such social reformers, in their list of obstacles which prevent the rise of the agricultural labourer, omit what nine times out of ten is the greatest obstacle of all,—the labourer himself. No worker for wages, it may be safely said, will ever better his position, be society reconstituted as it may, without thrift, self-denial, and temperance. In every village there are men who have thus risen; but they have been steady, saving, temperate men from the moment they began to earn man's wages. Their contemporaries who spent their surplus earnings at the public-house (pouring, as some do, four, five, or six shillings a week down their throats), and married at five or six and twenty with nothing laid by, remain where they were, "on the land"; sinking, unless they can shake off their drinking habits, into the ruck of supernumerary labourers, employed when work is plentiful, but out of work whenever it is scarce. If parsons and squires were done away with and Village Councils established to-morrow, what would that do for these men? Would it give them a better chance of employment? Would it make them more worth employing? I do not forget that there are also steady, sober, respectable men who do not rise, and never will rise, from the ranks of field-labour; for whom life is often a hard struggle, and the prospects of old age uncertain. I wish it were otherwise; I wish that wages were high enough to enable steady men to make better provision for old age, and remove all fear of the workhouse as the close of a life of honest toil. But what is to ensure this most desirable result? Getting rid of the squire,—the best employer of labour in many a parish? Turning out the parson,—the one resident who is bound by the mere fact of his being there to devote himself to the service of the people? Returning Mr. Gladstone to power, to be used immediately for purposes for which the English labourer cares nothing? These are the nostrums that

are now being so well advertised among the rural voters : bread pills, most of them, or idle incantations, useless for the present need :

————— Skillful leech
Mutters no spells o'er sore that needs the
knife.¹

No ; there is a deeper question behind,—a question which the Friends of Labour for the most part conveniently ignore—and that is the restoration of the agricultural industry, paralysed as it is by the simple fact that for some years past it has been impossible to grow corn at a profit. There is the kernel of the whole question. Fruit-growing, jam-making, dairy-farming, horse-breeding, poultry-keeping—all these in favourable circumstances may come in to help the farmer. They may or may not be practicable on his land ; it is by no means certain that they will always pay ; at best they are subsidiary to his main business. But one thing, and one only, will restore confidence to agriculture ; one thing only will enable the farmer to pay better permanent wages to his labourers,—and that is a permanent rise in the price of corn. Till this is reached, wages must be low : so long as wages are low, men will migrate to better themselves ; and not even Village Councils or Disestablishment will make village life happier or more attractive.

Let it not be thought however that those who object to certain prevalent nostrums for arresting the decay of village life are opposed to all attempts at improving the labourer's condition. All that we object to is that he should be misled by false hopes. We cordially welcome everything that tends to his moral and physical well-being, and to greater brightness and happiness in his life. Allotments, reading-rooms, entertainments, savings-banks, cricket-clubs,—anything that helps thrift, or provides rational amusement, must commend itself to reasonable men.

¹ Sophocles, *Ajax*, 582 (Plumptre's translation).

The modern Friends of Labour too often write and speak as if all such things were a new discovery of the party now desirous of office ; ignorantly or wilfully ignoring the means by which the clergy and earnest laity have long been striving to benefit their neighbours. Only those who have thus striven know the difficulty of the task. It is easy for platform-orators or newspaper-writers to talk about starting this or that agency for good in our villages. But before blaming those who have not started such things, or who have failed to keep them going, let our critics come and try. Let them realise the stupendous *vis inertiae* of country folk ; let them find out that it is one thing to collect young fellows together for a club or any similar object, and quite another to get them to keep to anything when the novelty has worn off. The one recreation that never seems to pall is beer and the public-house ; and till we can hit upon something that shall rival these attractions, nothing that we do to amuse and interest the labourer will be more than temporarily successful. I do not mean to imply that drunkenness is the labourer's joy. There is very much less of it than there used to be, and many regular frequenters of the public-house never get drunk. But the public-house is the labourer's club, the place where he is at ease among his mates, and can say what he thinks to men who think like himself without restraint from the presence of his social superiors. On the tap-room bench he is free and independent ; no one is patronising him or treating him like a child ; he amuses himself as he pleases and when he pleases. The village concert with " the quality " in the front seats ; the reading-room superintended by the parson ; the lecture or the technical instruction class,—all these are well in their way for an occasional variety ; but for a continuance, the social independence and free-and-easy talk of the public-house have the greater charm. If the public-house itself could be so refined

as to be more of a club and reading-room and less of a mere drinking-shop; if its beer were light and wholesome, and its customers could, if they preferred, be served with tea and coffee instead; perhaps it might even become a civilising and elevating agency in village life. But this is Utopian so long as public-houses are one and all "tied" to breweries, and licenses are generally granted to two or three times as many houses as are sufficient for the legitimate wants of a village. I am no fanatic advocate of total abstinence, nor do I believe in making men sober by Act of Parliament. But no one can live in the country, and go in and out among the people without becoming profoundly convinced that drink is their great curse, and the cause direct or indirect of three-fourths of the poverty and misery that exist; and that, this being so, far too many temptations are put in the way of men who in self-control are little better than children, and require protection against themselves. I do not grudge Hodge his glass or two of beer, if taken wholesomely at meals, and not at odd times upon an empty stomach; nor his evening chat at the public-house, so long as it does not send him home fuddled and quarrelsome. But I fear that, as things are at present, beer and the public-house have in the majority of cases a demoralising influence upon him.

A great deal has been made of the shortcomings of the clergy, and the labourers are being diligently taught to mistrust the parson,—I presume with an eye to Disestablishment in the future. I am not concerned now to defend my order. I will only say this with respect to the alleged hatred felt by labourers for the clergy, that so far as my own experience goes I have seldom met with anything but civility and cordiality from parishioners of the labouring class. And with respect to the alleged grievance that the parsons like to get everything into their own hands, all I can say is that many of them would be only too glad

if their parishioners would take a little more trouble upon themselves, instead of expecting everything to be done for them. Some country clergy may be fussy, interfering, narrow-minded; it would be strange indeed if we were all perfect. But take them all round, I know no body of men more conscientiously bent upon doing all the good they can; and that from no unworthy motive, such as the capturing of votes at an election, but from real interest in the welfare of the very men who are being so carefully taught to dislike and mistrust them. I say this the more freely, because I have not always been one of them. But if, in academic days, I was ever tempted to think lightly of my brethren in country parishes, a closer acquaintance with their work and character has entirely dispelled the thought.

Allotments and small holdings are sometimes vaunted as a panacea. But the latter cannot be established all at once. A peasant proprietary,—undoubtedly a great source of stability, as shown in the case of France—cannot be artificially created by simply dividing large holdings among labourers who may or may not be fit to manage a farm for themselves; it must be the slow growth of suitable, social, and economic conditions, utilised by industry, thrift, and intelligence. And as for allotments, which some persons seem to regard as a recent discovery of Radical politicians, the supposed difficulty of obtaining them is largely imaginary. Even forty years ago they were a matter of course in many country parishes, and few are now without them. In most places nowadays a labouring man can get, in the shape of a cottage-garden, or a field-garden, or both, as much ground as he can cultivate in his leisure hours; and a very substantial help does he find it towards the maintenance of his family. I speak, of course, of the steady sober men; upon the idle tipping loafer allotments, or anything else that can be devised for his im-

provement, will probably be thrown away. He will give you his vote, perhaps, if you promise him sufficient pickings out of other men's property ; but he will do you no credit afterwards. Allotments are good so far as they go, and no doubt help to make the labourer more contented. But they cannot satisfy the discontent which comes of desire for larger wages ; they cannot still the natural and partly laudable unrest which drives the more energetic and capable young men from their native fields to better their chances of earning money. Do what we can, we shall not persuade such men to stop at home, nor is it perhaps well that we should. They pass out from among us, and we see them no more. Some rise and prosper ; many of them never find their El Dorado ; many learn by bitter

experience that poverty is as hard to bear in the town as in the country. But if they are restless, they must go, and fight their battle for themselves.

The problems of agricultural life are well worth the attention of statesmen ; for the prosperity of agriculture, and the welfare of those who till the soil, are vital to our country. But the question must be grappled with in a far-seeing and statesmanlike spirit. If the only thing that rouses interest in the labourer's condition is an ignoble scramble for his vote on the eve of a General Election, if the labourer himself is to become, like unhappy Ireland, a shuttlecock between rival office-seekers, the problem will remain unsolved, at least for this generation.

T. L. PAPILLON.

HORACE,¹

THERE is a scene in *Silas Marner* which, though not perhaps the fittest introduction in the world to an article on classic poetry, expresses so well the feeling which is often aroused in us by a particular species of criticism, that we must crave the indulgence of our readers for introducing it on the present occasion. Says Ben Winthrop, the wheelwright, to Solomon Macey, the clerk: "Ah, Mr. Macey, you and me are two folks; when I've got a pot of good ale I like to swallow it, and do my inside good, i'stead o' smelling and staring at it to see if I can't find fault wi' the brewing."

It may be thought that if we carried out Mr. Winthrop's principle to the letter we should find it difficult to justify any kind of criticism whatever. But the reader must take note that this rustic philosopher makes it a condition that the ale shall be good. That point must be established first; and this much being conceded, he was evidently of opinion that further and more minute examination was only waste of breath. We must confess that some such thoughts as these have occasionally passed through our minds when reading reviews of great writers on whom the verdict of mankind has long since been pronounced: on whom the world has looked and seen that they were good; and whose power over our hearts and minds no change of taste can materially affect while literature and civilisation last. To point out the beauties and the blemishes of even the greatest poets whose reputation has endured for ages is a work not unworthy of the highest literary faculties, and one that may be

performed with advantage for the benefit of each succeeding generation by writers more in harmony with contemporary thought and taste than those of an earlier period. By this kind of criticism both the poet and the reader profit, and it is one of which we ought never to grow tired. But there is another kind of which we must own to have become somewhat intolerant, and that is the inquiry into the originality, the sincerity, the morality, and what not, of the bright particular stars which have shone so long in the literary firmament, and whose lustre can never be dimmed by any discoveries which are likely to be made now touching their possession of these qualities. Nobody derives less pleasure from Virgil because he is indebted to Ennius and Theocritus and Apollonius Rhodius, to say nothing of Homer. And even much of the accepted criticism on Homer himself seems to point to the existence of a previous ballad poetry which Homer wove into a whole, not sometimes without visible indication of the process. If the Homeric poems are the work of a single hand, Homer was not the first who sang the wrath of Achilles and the fate of Hector.

Is it not reasonable to suppose that all the great masterpieces of literature have been preceded by imperfect and desultory efforts in the same direction? Greek tragedy and comedy, the Roman Epic and the Roman Satire, as we know them in their full bloom, had all been preceded by cruder endeavours of which few remains have been preserved. May we not take it for granted that before any kind of literature culminates in that perfect form which perpetuates its existence and in virtue of which it is called classic, it has put forth many previous shoots which never arrived at ma-

¹ *Horace and the Elegiac Poets*; by W. Y. Sellar, M.A., LL.D., late Professor of Humanity in the University of Edinburgh, formerly Fellow of Oriel College. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1892.

turity, destined only to enrich subsequent labourers in the same field who have naturally and legitimately incorporated in their own more finely wrought works whatever they found worthy of preservation in the ruder composition of their predecessors? By some such process at all events the great works of antiquity were built up; and it seems rather late in the day now to be charging their authors with plagiarism, more especially when we remember that English literature is no stranger to the practice, and that its most conspicuous ornament was also the most addicted to it.

These reflections are suggested by a question which has recently been raised again in a quarter where we are accustomed to look for liberal and graceful scholarship, and that is the originality of the poet Horace, who according to a writer in the *Quarterly Review* was more deeply indebted to Lucilius than has been generally supposed, or than even Professor Sellar, our greatest authority on the Roman poets of the Republican and Augustan eras, appears to have recognised. This position is supported with much ingenuity, a copious array of evidence and a considerable display of learning, leaving however the impression, though doubtless an incorrect one, that the reviewer had either not read or had forgotten what Professor Sellar himself says upon the subject in the first volume of his work¹ published nearly thirty years ago. He there covers the whole ground now traversed by the *Quarterly* reviewer, and scarcely misses a single one of the points to which the latter calls attention. In the chapter on Lucilius he gives the earlier Roman satirist full credit for all that the reviewer claims for him. Horace's obligations to him are allowed in full; but he does not attach quite the same importance to them as does the reviewer.

The truth seems to be that whatever Horace may have borrowed in the shape of incident or anecdote, or even suggestion, from those who went before

him,—a question, as it seems to us, of comparative insignificance—his satire in itself was all his own and peculiar to himself. Persius contrasts him with Lucilius in a well-known passage:—

Secuit Lucilius urbem,
Te Lupe, te Muci, et genuinum fregit in
illis.
Omne vafer vitium rident Flaccus amico
Tangit, et admissus circum præcordia
ludit.¹

Now this is exactly the satire of Addison with whom Horace has so often been compared. If we take Thackeray's description of Addison in the *Lectures on the Humourists* it may stand *mutatis mutandis* for a description of Horace. Nor is a strong resemblance wanting between Horace and Thackeray himself. A great part of the *Book of Snobs* is compiled quite in the spirit of the Roman Satirist—Jenkins the bore, Wiggle the lady-killer, the people who are for ever speculating about their neighbours' incomes, the worship of rank and riches, are all essentially Horatian, as well as the Tory Foxhunters in *The Freeholder* and the coffee-house politician so deliciously described in No. 403 of *The Spectator*. Horace's obligations to Lucilius do not detract in the smallest degree from his title to originality as the founder of that kind of satire which has been most to the taste of modern time. If Lucilius was the father of political satire, Horace was just as certainly the father of social satire. But if we once begin to trace the various rivers of literature to their respective sources we are soon lost among primeval swamps and forests. In the meantime there stands Horace,—*teres atque rotundus*—a poet who has delighted twenty centuries, and will delight twenty more if the world lasts so long. Why should we be so curious to know what he is made of? If he has rescued from oblivion portions of

¹ And yet arch Horace, when he strove to mend,
Probed every foible of his smiling friend,
Played lightly round and round the peccant part,
And won unfelt an entrance to the heart.

¹ *Roman Poets of the Republic*, 1863.

the work of writers who would otherwise have perished, we should rather be grateful to him than reproachful. At all events we have got Horace, and we have not got Lucilius. A wise man will take him as he finds him, to do his inside good without asking too many questions about the brewing.

We must remember too that both in the Satires, Epistles, and Odes, Horace was doing what we have described in the beginning of this article, imparting form and finish to what had hitherto been rude and desultory. Mark Pattison's introduction to the *Essay on Man* may be read together with Mr. Sellar's new published *Essay on Horace* in illustration of the statement. Mr. Sellar dwells on it repeatedly. "Horace," he says (p. 105), "saw that fervour of feeling and a great spirit which were the gifts of the old writers were not enough to produce immortal works like those produced by the genius of Greece. . . . The work which had to be done in his time could not be done by those powers alone. That work was to find, at last, the mastery of form, rhythm, and style, the perfection and moderation of workmanship which would secure for the efforts of Roman genius as sure a passport to immortality as had been secured for the master-pieces of Greek literature." In a word, Horace represented and led the literary craving after form which followed an age of lawless and licentious exuberance; these words are Mr. Pattison's who, laying down very justly that form is the condition of all art, describes Pope as the greatest literary artist except Gray which our language has produced. Mr. Sellar, we presume, would say that Horace was the greatest literary artist which the Latin language had produced, not perhaps excepting even Virgil. The admirers of Horace might well be satisfied to rest his claims to distinction on this achievement alone. But we may go further than this. When, after a series of efforts in any one department of literature, vigorous perhaps and even passionate, but raw,

harsh, and undisciplined, the man at last appears who takes up the work and succeeds where his predecessors failed, brings symmetry and regularity out of disproportion and disorder, harmony out of discord, and chiselled beauty out of the half-wrought marble, such a man we say is a creator and deserves all the honours of an original writer. If there are any who prefer the rough blocks to the finished palace we would only say to them what Dr. Johnson said, when told by somebody that he preferred Donne's satires to Pope's adaptation, "I cannot help that, Sir."

So much then of Horace and Lucilius. Nobody can possibly recognise the obligations of the junior to the senior more fully than Mr. Sellar; but he sees clearly enough that it is no matter of reproach to him. The question of Horace's "sincerity" is closely allied with the above; and here again Mr. Sellar's advocacy is triumphant. That scenes and characters in the Satires are not so much direct reproductions of particular incidents or persons as generalisations from what he had witnessed in the varied experience of life may be true enough. He may never have dined with Nasidienus or have met that famous bore in the Via Sacra. He may have taken parts of his descriptions from Lucilius, but Horace we may be sure must have known many such hosts as Nasidienus and must have been present at many similar entertainments. He must have met in his time many such nuisances as the troublesome gentleman from whom he was delivered by Apollo; and moreover in this satire Horace had a special purpose to serve,—to show up the absurdities and falsehoods current in Roman society about Mæcenæ's "set," as they are current in all societies about similar exclusive circles. The street Arab in *Sybil* who professed to tell his pal what the "nobs" had for supper was not wider of the mark than the gossips who swarmed at Rome just as they now swarm in London. The bore in Lucilius may have suggested to him a

very good way of carrying this purpose into effect. But why linger over this kind of criticism? Did Addison ever see Will Wimble, or that excellent inn-keeper who was three yards in girth and the best Church of England man on the road? Did either Dick Ivy or Lord Potato ever dine with Smollett?

It is sometimes asked whether Horace was sincere in his satire, in his patriotism, in his amatory poems, and in his professed love of nature and the country. As for his satire he was as sincere as a gentleman need be. He had not the *sarva indignatio* of Carlyle, or Swift, or Juvenal. How could he have? He could not break butterflies on wheels. But he was as sincere as Addison. In his *Meditations in Westminster Abbey* Addison says that when he meets with the grief of parents on a tombstone his heart melts with compassion. It did not melt very much, Thackeray thought, and we perfectly agree with him. Are we to suppose that Thackeray himself was inspired by any burning wrath when he drew his pen upon the snobs? Horace had probably just as much and just as little real anger in his heart when he laughed at Catus and Tigellinus. He was sincere enough in ridiculing whatever was ridiculous; and in the Satires at all events he aimed at nothing more than this. Mr. Sellar thinks that in the Epistles we see Horace in the character of a moral teacher. But we should question whether this object stood first with him in the composition of his letters. Horace had a turn for moralising. We see it everywhere; and the *savoir vivre* and *savoir faire* are what he was specially fond of dwelling upon. He gives excellent advice to young men; and is evidently rather vain of his own knowledge of society, and of the way to succeed in it.

Quo tandem pacto deceat majoribus uti.

This is the burden of his song, and whenever he recurs to it his name is Horatius, and his foot is on his native

heath. But of moral philosophy in the stricter sense of the term we do not see that the Epistles contain much. They are letters which a highly cultivated and accomplished man of the world, whose vocation was literature and whose tastes led him towards ethics, might be expected to write to congenial spirits, whether statesmen, lawyers, or men of letters. But his philosophy is the practical philosophy which lies upon the surface, which most men who combine intellectual power with common sense are prepared to follow, and which has little to do with the learning of the schools. Sir George Trevelyan says that his uncle, Lord Macaulay, was fond of pacing the cloisters of Trinity discoursing "The picturesque but somewhat esoteric philosophy which it pleased him to call by the name of metaphysics." We should say that if we substitute moral philosophy for metaphysics this was what Horace was fond of doing.

Horace's patriotism was also of the common sense species. If he could not have the Republic he would make the best of the Empire. He was no irreconcilable. He would not waste his life in sighing like Lucan over a fallen cause and a political system which could never be recalled, and which it is not certain that it was desirable to recall. He must have seen that the two great parties into which the Republic was divided, and which in its better days kept the balance between order and liberty, had gradually degenerated into selfish factions with scarcely the semblance of a principle between them. Was it really the part of a patriot to hope for the restoration of senatorial or parliamentary government? Was not an enlightened despotism a good exchange for Marius and Sulla? Whether any such thoughts passed through Horace's mind or not, he accepted the defeat of his own party as an accomplished fact and with considerable equanimity, and was quite ready to pray for Augustus as the saviour of society. The feeling which must have been entertained by many

educated and thoughtful Romans, if not by the whole upper and middle class who had gone through a century of revolutions, is expressed in the words of Virgil:—

Di patrii, Indigetes, et Romule Vestaque
mater,
Quæ Tuscum Tiberim et Romana Palatia
servas,
Hunc saltem everso juvenem succurrere
sæculo
Ne prohibete!

That was the end of the whole matter. The first necessity for Rome was the restoration of law, order, and permanent tranquillity. One hand alone seemed capable of ensuring these blessings, and Horace, and Virgil, and the other leading men of letters at Rome became its willing instruments.

Professor Sellar divides Horace's Odes into (1) The National, Religious, and Ethical Odes; (2) The lighter Poems in the Greek Measure, *ἐρωτικά* and *συνποτικά*, and (3) The Occasional Poems of Horace's own life and experience. The National Odes express the sentiments referred to in the above paragraph. But Mr. Sellar does not bestow unqualified commendation on them. He thinks that the *dulcedo otii* spoken of by Tacitus carried Horace and other honest Imperialists a little too far. In the second ode of the Fourth Book he detects the first notes of that servile adulation "which was the bane of the next century." Of course we must all admit that settled order, security for life and property, all the conditions in fact under which alone the ordinary business of civilised communities can be conducted, have sometimes to be purchased at a great price. And so it was at Rome. The defence of those who paid it is that nothing else was possible. The mischief was already done. The Roman aristocracy and the Roman populace between them had made free institutions unworkable. Cicero pinned all his hopes on the equestrian order, much as Sir Robert Peel did afterwards on the middle classes. But it was too late at Rome. Public spirit and politi-

cal faith were dead, drowned in the sea of blood which the great factions had poured out. There was no help for it. Concurrently with this revolution began the decay of Roman character, and the so-called "adulation" which has been so much complained of by modern writers was only what might have been expected. Moreover a great part of it was purely formal, and meant no more than the words in the liturgy, "Our most religious and gracious Sovereign," while part of it was legitimately based upon an article in the Pagan creed which even Tacitus did not entirely reject. It seems to us that Mr. Sellar's use of the word "adulation" is a little inconsistent with what he says elsewhere of the deification of the Emperor.

It is in the Odes expressive of national and imperial sentiment, that we seem to find most of real meaning in the religious language of Horace. The analogy between Jove in Heaven and Augustus on Earth is often hinted at; and the ground of this analogy is indicated by the emphatic stress laid on the triumph of Jove over the Giants,

Clari Giganteo triumpho (iii. 1).

It is the supremacy of order in the world of nature and human affairs which the imagination of Horace sees personified in that Jove,

Qui terram inertem, qui mare temperat
Ventosum, et urbes, regnaque tristia,
Divosque mortalesque turbas
Imperio regit unus æquo (iii. 4).

Augustus is regarded as the minister and vice-regent on earth of this supreme power,—

Te minor lætum reget æquus orbem—
and it is on this ground that a divine function is attributed to him.

If it was the popular belief that great heroes and statesmen were admitted to the company of the gods after death, it was a very short step from this belief to the conception of the head of the Roman Empire, the ruler of the modern world, as a god designate, and entitled therefore even before death to some kind of worship.

Of Horace's own religious belief he makes no secret. He was at heart a Lucretian. But he looked on the poetical superstitions of the Pagan world with the eye of a man of taste; much as many men at the present day may regard the saints and angels of the Romish Church, which bring mankind into such close communion with another world and appeal so powerfully to the imagination. Horace could not have been insensible to the charm. He did not fail, says Mr. Sellar,—

To recognise in the religious forms and beliefs of the past a salutary power to heal some of the evils of the present, and also a material by which his lyrical art could move the deeper sympathies and charm the fancy of his contemporaries. Nor need we suppose the feeling out of which his world of supernatural beings and agencies is recreated altogether insincere. Though the actual course of his life may be regulated in accordance with the negative conclusions of the understanding, the imagination of a poet like Horace and Lucretius is moved to the recognition of some transcendent power and agency, hidden in the world and yet sometimes apparent on the surface, which it associates with some concern for the course of nature and human affairs, and even of individual destiny. It is natural for the poet or artist to embody the suggestion of this mysterious feeling which gives its transcendent quality to his poetry or art, in the forms of traditional belief into which he breathes new life.

Horace might have been conscious of some such feeling as is so beautifully expressed in these well-known lines :

The intelligible forms of ancient poets,
The fair humanities of old religion,
The power, the beauty, and the majesty,
That had their haunts in dale, or piny
mountain,
Or forest by slow stream, or pebbly spring,
Or chasms and watery depths ; all these
have vanish'd.
They live no longer in the faith of reason !
But still the heart doth need a language,
still
Doth the old instinct bring back the old
names.
And to yon starry world they now are
gone,
Spirits or gods, that used to share this earth

With man as with their friend ; and to
the lover

Yonder they move, from yonder visible sky
Shoot influence down : and even at this
day

'Tis Jupiter that brings whate'er is great,
And Venus who brings everything that's
fair.

Along with the apology for the Empire which the literature of the day was called on to supply was the further object of reviving a belief in the old Italian religion and the old Latin deities. How exquisitely Virgil performed his share of the task no scholar requires to be told. But he was less under the influence of Greek ideas than Horace. And there is a reality and "a reverential piety" in his treatment of the subject, which we miss in the lyric poet, who "surrounds the gods and goddesses of Italy with the associations of Greek art in poetry." It was because he found these divinities in his favourite Greek authors that he was willing to people the groves and valleys of Italy with the same order of beings. Mr. Sellar is seen at his best in this part of his subject.

Horace's poetical conscience,—if we may use the phrase—held him clear of all blame in writing as he did of the nymphs and the Fauns, of Pan and Bacchus. He lived, we may believe, like many other eminent men of letters, two lives. Walking about the streets of Rome, playing at ball, looking on at the jugglers, or dining with Mæcenas, he was the shrewd man of the world, the Epicurean sceptic to whom the creed of his ancestors was foolishness. Far away amid the solitary scenes of nature, other thoughts and other ideas may have taken possession of him. He may have asked himself whether the old mythology was not, after all, something more than a beautiful dream ; whether the forces of nature might not sometimes assume the shapes which religion had assigned to them ; and whether such a belief was not more soothing to the human spirit than the cold negations

of the atheistic philosophy. Then it is that, as he strolls along the Sabine valley or approaches the Bandusian fountain, the *genius loci* casts its spell upon him, and he hears the reed of Faunus piping in the distant hills and catches a glimpse of the Naiad as she rises from the sacred spring.

It is not difficult to believe that Horace may at times have projected himself into the past with sufficient force of imagination to bring himself under the influence of the old faith, and to prevent his recognition of the Pagan deities from being open to any charge of insincerity. Or, if we reject this hypothesis, there is nothing discreditable to Horace in supposing that he merely took up the rural traditions where he found them, and used their more picturesque and graceful elements as materials for poetry. He must have known that whatever he wrote in this manner would be read by the light of his avowed scepticism, and that, as nobody could be deceived by it, so nobody would suspect him of hypocrisy. We should prefer to believe however that Horace was at times accessible to the reflection that there might be more things in the world than were dreamed of in his philosophy, and that however much he may have disbelieved in the intelligible forms of old religion, he may not have been entirely devoid of some sympathy with the religion of nature.

The amatory and convivial poems of Horace speak for themselves. Nobody ever supposed that in writing of the Lalages, Neæras, and Glyceas, who were asked to the elegant little supper-parties given by the Roman men of wit and pleasure, Horace was using the language of real passion, which he was probably incapable of feeling. But Mr. Sellar scouts the notion that these poems were merely literary studies addressed to imaginary personages. He thinks that some of them, like the scenes and characters in the Satires, may be generalised from Horace's experience not to represent individuals. But he be-

lieves that many of them were well known to the poet, though his relations with them may have been Platonic. He goes further than this and thinks that the women themselves "were refined and accomplished ladies leading a somewhat independent but quite decorous life." What then made them so difficult of access? Why do we hear so much of the janitors, and the bolts and bars, and the windows? That many of them were educated and refined women and capable of inspiring gentlemen and scholars with the most ardent affection we may learn from Catullus and Tibullus. But there is never any talk of marriage with them. No: it is pretty clear to what class they belonged, and Horace was not the man to break his heart for any dozen such. Women in his eyes were playthings, and no sensible man ought to give himself a moment's uneasiness about the best of them. For good wine he had a much more sincere respect. He held with Cratinus that no water-drinker could write poetry. He resembles Addison again in both these particulars; in his high opinion of the flask and his low opinion of the sex. But he does not resemble him at all in another characteristic which Mr. Sellar thinks is one of his most strongly marked traits; his love of nature and of country life,—“The dream of Roman poets,” as Newman says, “from Virgil to Juvenal, and the reward of Roman statesmen from Cincinnatus to Pliny.”

How any doubt can have arisen with regard to Horace's sincerity when he writes on these subjects passes our comprehension. A man who only pretends to be a lover of the country never ventures beyond safe generalities. Horace specifies each tree, streamlet, and hill with the touch of one who knew them intimately; he had a Roman's eye for the picturesque and reproduces it in his verse with an easy accuracy which nothing but long and loving contemplation could have enabled him to attain. He differs from Virgil no doubt to this extent,—

and it is a very important difference—that while Horace loved the beauties of nature Virgil loved nature herself. Virgil loved the country like Wordsworth, Horace like Thomson. There is nothing to show that Horace took the same pleasure as Virgil did in natural history, or in contemplating the operations of husbandry. But he never pretends that he does. In the second epode he is not laughing at such tastes; he seems simply to be illustrating the ruling passion exemplified probably in the behaviour of some well-known character at Rome, who was perhaps just then the subject of conversation in Horace's set. The sincerest lover of country life would be the first to ridicule this affected enthusiasm. The genuine worshipper of the rural gods would be irritated and disgusted by this desecration of his idol; he would feel his sanctuary polluted and vulgarised by the intrusive admiration of this cockney tradesman thinking it a fine thing to prate about the pleasures of the country and especially about country sports. This no doubt was the offence of which Alphiuss had been guilty, and which had been duly reported to Horace by one of his comrades. And the second epode was the consequence. To suppose that it was really meant as a covert satire upon country life seems little short of monstrous. It was exactly the reverse; it was a satire upon the sham admiration of it, prompted by an outrage on the real.

But whatever difference of opinion may exist with regard to Horace's originality and sincerity little or none is to be found on the question of his style. In his Satires and Epistles he did for Latin verse composition what Addison did for English prose composition. This is Mr. Sellar's dictum. "It was as great a triumph of art to bend the stately Latin hexameter into a flexible instrument for the use of his *musa pedestris* as to have been the inventor of a prose style equal to that of Addison or Montaigne. The

metrical success which Horace obtained in an attempt in which Lucilius absolutely failed is almost as remarkable as that obtained in his lyrical metres." Here then at all events Horace has an indisputable claim to originality. At the same time it must be remembered that Horace had greater difficulties to contend with in bringing down verse than Addison experienced in bringing down prose, to the level of "refined and lively conversation." He could not get rid of metrical conditions, and the consequence is that he is more frequently guilty of what Conington calls "the besetting sin of the Augustan poets," that is, excessive condensation, than any one of his contemporaries. Horace was conscious of it himself; *Brevi esse laboro, obscurus fio*. In endeavouring to avoid what Pattison calls the "diffuse prodigality" of an earlier school Horace fell into the opposite extreme, and omitted what was necessary to connect one train of thought with another. This was not the result of any indifference to the thought. The theory, which we have seen advanced, that Horace in his Odes was contented with writing something like nonsense verses, and let the meaning take care of itself so long as he was satisfied with the music, is contradicted by the fact that we have just the same condensation and obscurity in the Satires and Epistles, where Horace was certainly not aiming at perfection of sound or metre. We find also precisely the same fault in Pope, proceeding from the same cause. Take one instance:—

In hearts of Kings or arms of Queens who
lay,
How happy those to ruin, these betray.

And scores of such examples might be quoted. The most conspicuous instance of this defect in Horace is briefly referred to by Mr. Sellar, who however offers no explanation of it. It occurs in the Ode to Fortune (*O Diva, gratum quæ regis Antium, i.*

35) Horace, addressing the goddess, says :—

Te Spes et albo rara Fides colit
Velata panno nec comitem abnegat,
Utunque mutata potentes
Veste domos inimica linquis.

Now if Loyalty clings to a falling house when Fortune has deserted it, how can Loyalty be said to follow Fortune? If she accompanies Fortune and deserts those whom the goddess deserts, how can she be called Loyalty? We all know what Horace means, of course. Hope and Loyalty continue to wait on Fortune whether she smiles or frowns; whichever side of her face she turns towards their friends, Hope and Loyalty are constant to them. But the word *linquis* implies that Fortune flies away, and *nec comitem abnegat* that Loyalty goes with her. But there is no other passage in Horace so unmanageable as this; though his meaning is often packed so closely in such a very small parcel that it takes some time to find it out.

Quintilian says that there are some passages in Horace which he would rather not try to explain. But that Horace habitually sacrificed sense to sound is a proposition which can hardly be accepted on the strength only of such passages as we have seen brought forward in support of it. As however we do not profess to understand Latin better than Horace did himself, we shall say no more about it. But of the exquisite melody and perfect finish which he imparted to his lyric metres we may perhaps speak with less presumption. Horace's chief claim to the homage of posterity rests on his position as one of the great literary artists of the world. Here he stands alone; nobody else has been able to play upon that instrument; as Munro has well said, the secret of its music was lost with its inventor.

Non bene conveniunt nec in una sede
morantur

Majestas et amor,

says Ovid; and these two qualities, so

rarely united, Horace has combined in perfection. The *Alcaic Ode* with its combination of strength and beauty is Horace, and Horace is the *Alcaic Ode*. The rise and fall of the metre, culminating in the third line on which the whole stanza seems as it were balanced or supported, and then falling away in the more rapid and dactylic, but less emphatic movement of the fourth, is one of the greatest triumphs of the metrical art which poetry has produced. The *Sapphic* is equally his own property, and occasionally equals the *Alcaic* in the mellowness of its tones; but its general effect is that of liveliness and vivacity, though it sometimes rises to the majestic also; it is to the *Alcaic* what the lute is to the flute. Horace broke them both as he was laid on the *Esquiline Hill* beside the bones of his patron, and no man was heir to that matchless gift, the like of which only appears at rare intervals in the history of literature.

Objection has been taken to the designation of Queen Anne's and the early Georgian epoch as the Augustan age of England. But in one respect it is apt enough. What Pope was to the poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that were Horace and Virgil to the poets of the Republic. If in many respects,—in the quality of his satire, in his good nature and moderation—Horace resembled Addison, in his metrical capacity and in his methods also he resembled Pope. Hear Thackeray again. "He (Pope) polished, he refined, he thought; he took thoughts from other works to adorn and complete his own; borrowing an idea or a cadence from another poet as he would a figure or a simile from a flower or a river or any object which struck him in his walk or contemplation of nature." Are we reading of the English or the Roman poet, of the reign of Augustus or the reign of Anne? Is not this Horace himself, the very man?

Another point of resemblance be-

tween the two periods is the demand which arose in both for the political support of literature. As Horace and Virgil were called upon to uphold the new government at Rome, so Addison and Steele were called upon to uphold the new government in England. We cannot indeed compare *The Campaign* or *The Freeholder* with the *Quæ cura Patrum* or *Divis orte bonis*, which last reminds us more of Shakespeare's compliment to Queen Elizabeth; but both had their origin in similar political exigencies, and in each case alike the champions of the existing order were liberally rewarded.

But besides the imperishable specimens of literary art which he has left behind him, Horace has other claims on our respect which many readers may think of equal value. A man may be a great poet without being a man of letters, as he may certainly be a man of letters without being a great poet. Horace was both. He was deeply read in all the literature then extant; and next to the woods and the hills which he loved so well, his daily delight was in his library. The picture which he draws of himself in his country home affords us a delightful glimpse of such literary leisure as is only possible in the golden days of good Haroun Alraschid. Horace goes to bed and gets up when he likes; there is no one to drag him down to the law courts the first thing in the morning, to remind him of any important engagement with his brother scribes, to solicit his interest with Mæcenæ, or to tease him about public affairs and the latest news from abroad. He can bury himself in his Greek authors, or ramble through the woody glens which lay at the foot of Mount Ustica, without a thought of business or a feeling that he ought to be otherwise employed. In the evening he returns to his own fireside, to his dinner of beans and bacon and the company of his country neighbours, who were men of education and intel-

ligence, competent to bear their part in the conversation of which he was so fond, concerning the good of life, the value of riches, and the motives of friendship. The entertainment, we may presume, was not always on so very moderate a scale. The dinner table of Ofellus (*Satire* ii. 2) was probably more like Horace's when he entertained a friend from town, or a country acquaintance who had dropped in for shelter from the rain. The *olus* and *perna*, corresponding perhaps to our ham and peas, or else the *fabæ Pythagoræ* and the *uncta obscurula lardo* seem to have been standing dishes at the tables of the yeoman and smaller gentry of Horace's time when they were alone and on ordinary days. But on festive occasions a joint of lamb and a roast fowl could be added to it, with a dessert of nuts, grapes, and figs, at which they sat pretty late over their wine. How modern it all seems! Pope had no difficulty in turning the *menu* of Ofellus into a dinner given by himself at Twickenham, with hardly the alteration of a word.

It is difficult to imagine any life more delightful than was led by this accomplished man for nearly thirty years; in easy circumstances, with all that fame could give, admitted to the closest intimacy with the high-born and highly cultivated society which formed the Court of Augustus, and which has been equalled only at a few choice epochs of the world's history; free to employ himself as he pleased, to enjoy all the luxuries, and all the intellectual intercourse of a great capital, or to retire, as he chose, to his beautiful rural home and his well-stocked bookshelves—*ducere sollicitæ jucunda obliuia vitæ*. It is probable that at one time he was something of a sportsman, and varied his researches into what was even then called ancient literature, with the occasional pursuit of stag, hare, or boar. He was unmarried, it is true; but if he lacked the happiness which springs from the affections he probably

did not miss it, and he escaped its concomitant anxieties. Yet with everything else to cheer him, with every elegant enjoyment at his command, with no taste ungratified and no ambition disappointed, we still see that Horace was subject to that undefinable melancholy which the sceptical philosophy grafted on to the poetical temperament can hardly fail to engender. In the *linguenda tellus*, and the *ateternum exilium* he is not merely converting to poetical uses feelings which are common to mankind in all ages of the world. The same reflection recurs too often to allow of our doubting that it was habitual, and that it coloured all his views of life. The frequency of suicide among the ancients had its origin in an intensified form of this despondency. Horace doubtless did not experience it in its severest shape; he was too well fitted by nature for the enjoyment of life and society to give way to any deep or permanent depression. But it forced its way on his mind at intervals, and is a haunting presence in many of his writings when there is no open expression of it. As has been said of great wealth so we may say of such a life as Horace's, that it was calculated to make a death-bed very painful. Modern scepticism for the most part contents itself with asserting that we have no evidence to justify belief in a future state, but each man may think what he likes about the immortality of the soul. Horace was scarcely at liberty to do this. He must have looked on death as annihilation. The question may be asked whether if he had believed in a future state of rewards and punishments, he would have been any the

happier. It is a question beyond the scope of this paper. But Newman has a passage in the *Office and Work of Universities* not altogether remote from it, and so singularly applicable to the life of Horace that we cannot do better than close our own remarks with one of the most charming specimens even of Newman's style that can be found:—

Easy circumstances, books, friends, literary connections, the fine arts, presents from abroad, foreign correspondents, handsome appointments, elegant simplicity, gravel walks, lawns, flower-beds, trees and shrubberies, summer-houses, strawberry-beds, a greenhouse, a wall for peaches, *hoc erat in votis*;—nothing out of the way, no hot-houses, graperies, pineries—*Persicos odi, puer, apparatus*—no mansions, no parks, no deer, no preserves; these things are not worth the cost, they involve the bother of dependants, they interfere with enjoyment. One or two faithful servants, who last on as the trees do, and cannot change their place;—the ancients had slaves, a sort of dumb waiter, and the real article; alas! they are impossible now. We must have no one with claims upon us, or with rights; no incumbrances; no wife and children; they would hurt our dignity. We must have acquaintances within reach, yet not in the way; ready, not troublesome or intrusive. We must have something of name, or of rank, or of ancestry, or of past official life, to raise us from the dead level of mankind, to afford food for the imagination of our neighbours.

. . . To a life such as this a man is more attached the longer he lives; and he would be more and more happy in it too, were it not for the *memento* within him, that books and gardens do not make a man immortal; that though they do not leave him, he at least must leave them, all but "the hateful cypresses," and must go where the only book is the book of doom, and the only garden the Paradise of the Just.

MRS. DRIFFIELD.

A SKETCH.

OUR house stands in a quiet, almost suburban side street, and it has no area-entrance; consequently when Mrs. Driffeld calls this is what happens.

First, the garden-gate gives a sad, long shriek; it never shrieks for me or my ordinary guests, so I suppose Mrs. Driffeld bears heavily upon it, as Goethe said his countrymen did on life. Then there comes an undecided pattering a-out the doorstep, as if the visitor could not determine whether she were worthy to use the scraper or not. Presently this too ceases, and just as you come to the conclusion that it was a false alarm or a wandering advertisement there is a single helpless "flop" of the knocker, which means Mrs. Driffeld, and nothing else in the world. She never disappoints you, never fails to be Mrs. Driffeld, after the process of the gate-screaming, the step-pattering, the knocker-dabbing is gone through; the whole thing takes from seven to ten minutes, according to fine or wet weather, and you are glad when you know the worst.

"Mrs. Driffeld has called and would like to see you, ma'am."

"Very well. I'll come directly; ask her to sit down in the hall. Ellen" (this confidentially to the maid), "is it just a usual, indefinite visit, or has she something to sell?"

"I am not sure, ma'am, but I'm afraid she *has* something under her shawl."

This is the worst kind of visit!

It is no good sitting down to finish a note or get to the end of a chapter after this. The shadow of Mrs. Driffeld lies upon me, the burden of

the mystery which she carries under her shawl.

As I look longingly at my book, her reproachful single cough resounds from the hall; I know that I must go down and buy "it," whether it be her own crochet, or her carpenter-son's fretwork, or the shell ornaments from Venice which her sailor-son consigned to her care before drowning, or the "shot violet parasole" which her youngest daughter's mistress at Haverstock Hill gave her as good as new, "The summer the family went to Westgate-on-Sea, which is not suitable, ma'am, for my girl, and more in your line, I venture to remark, as can afford to dress handsome."

Buying old clothes being not really in my line at all. I have stood out against the "shot violet" so far, deftly turning the conversation in every other direction so soon as it crops up; but nevertheless I feel that sleight of tongue will not avail me for ever, and sooner or later I shall be caught in the toils of this violet web.

"I just called in, ma'am, to ask how you was, not having seen you about lately and the weather so treacherous, and I ventured to bring you this to look at."

Then I know my doom is sealed.

Mrs. Driffeld is a small person, with a large face, like the face of a sad, old, white horse. She dresses in very deep mourning, save for a crimson paper rose which flames in the forehead of her crane bonnet; she has a pair of black *suède* gloves through which her fingers, crippled with rheumatism, poke ostentatiously. She can do rough needlework and charring with these crooked hands, but their

knobs and distortions are a source of unalloyed pride to her.

"Dr. Evans, at the 'Spensary, he's said to memany a time, 'Mrs. Driffield,' he says, 'it's a wonder to me how you holds anything at all, and it's as good as a play to see you pick up a sixpence.' But I always answers him that the wind *is* tempered, ma'am, which it need be indeed to me, for the dear good man's cut off with this influenzy, and never another sixpence shall I ever have off him. Which brings me back to what I was saying, and what I was a-going to show you."

"Mrs. Driffield," I say severely, "you oughtn't to be reduced to this selling, which is only another form of begging. You are the mother of eleven children, and surely they ought to be able to help you; if not, you know, you ought to make up your mind to go into the House."

"Thirteen, dear, thirteen," corrects my visitor—"thirteen of my own, buried and unburied, not to speak of other people's!" And I recollect myself to accredit her with her lawful (though unattractive) baker's dozen, and to recall that in her day she has been a Gamp of some celebrity, a fact which she somehow always classes with her own claims as a mother in Israel.

"That's where it is, ma'am," she now goes off triumphantly; "if Driffield and me hadn't brought up thirteen and buried five of them respectably" [she seemed to have a notion that the grave was as good a start as any other] "on two-and-twenty shillings a week I wouldn't have said nothink; but seeing that we have, and him took off at sixty-four with nothing more than a poisoned finger, I do feel it hard that we shouldn't get no better reward than them as has spendthrifted and worse all their days."

Her reasoning is somewhat involved, but I recognise the truth of her argument. Is the House to be the end of thrifty and unthrifty alike, of the toiling parents of thirteen as well as

of the out-at-elbows vagabond whose family are "on the parish" all their lives, more or less?

"Doesn't your clergyman help you?" I say, feebly fencing against the "shot violet parasole," which I now see plainly protruding from her scanty skirts.

"Not he, dear, not he! You see I have always gone to St. Augustine's, and dressed genteel in spite of the pinch at home, and St. Augustine's is what you may call a very elegant church. To be sure, I *have* heard them pray for the fruits of the earth in due season; but I don't suppose there's one of the gentlemen there as don't sit down to his forced strawberries and his early peas every day to his luncheon or his meat-tea. Everything's done very high there, I assure you, and nothink much given away, unless it be charity ordinations and such like, which I don't care about myself."

What sort of wholesale means of grace "charity ordinations" comprise I am at a loss to determine, but from Mrs. Driffield's sniff I conclude that they are obsolete or insufficient.

"Since Elisha went, I've not been so regular at church as I might ha' been, I confess," Mrs. Driffield goes on candidly; "but p'rhaps I've done more Bible readin' at home," and she looks at me with her long, old face slightly tilted on one side, to see if I am going to dispute this hypothesis.

"You could not do better," I remark judiciously.

"It's a wonderful book, ma'am: something for everybody in it, and something for every time. There's sad chapters to take you down a bit when you feel cheerful, and merry chapters to pick you up when you feel sad. My favourite chapter of all, dear, is in St. Luke; many a laugh I've had over that christening."

"What chapter is that, Mrs. Driffield?"

"Why, the christening at Zacharias's, dear, when he took 'em all in so about the baby's name! They all

thought as he was to be called after the grandpa', an' then Zacharias he ups and says, 'His name is John,' and John it had to be, sure enough! That Zacharias must 'a been a merry man; any way, he's given me many a good laugh when I've been feeling a bit down,—after Elisha went more pertiklery."

I think of our careful, studious vicar who begs we will give our poor neighbours "sound Church principles" to work upon, and I withhold all comment from this new reading of the first chapter of St. Luke.

The "Elisha" to whom Mrs. Driffield constantly refers is a poor ne'er-do-well daughter, who, after living with her mother a few months of her widowhood, drifted into the surf of London street-life and had not re-emerged. Her real name I presently discovered to be Alicia. "A fancy name," the mother explained, "came to me, sudden-like, while I was pickin' a few winkles the night before she was born; seems almost as if it was a judgment that she should be the one to go wrong; but, after all, one out of thirteen don't seem much, do it, dear, when all's said and done? After she left me, I took an' sanctified the name, so to speak, and calls it Elisha. Yes, I expects her to come back some day; I'm sure of it, and that's why I stops on at the old place, that she may know where to come to. She always had high notions, poor girl, through bein' deceived by a butler at her first place, so I try to keep out of the House on her account; not to give her a shock, like, if she came back sudden. An' if you *could* find a use for this, ma'am" (suddenly unsheathing her weapon)—

I temporise, for the time being, with a shilling.

One evening, about six o'clock, "by the pricking of my thumb" and other signs, I know that Mrs. Driffield has arrived. Did I mention that she always chooses twilight for her visits, and prefers miserable weather, when

she enters with a gust of rain and stands in a puddle of her own dripping? To-night her hands are empty and ungloved, her flaccid face has a gleam of excitement playing on its empty surface, her head jerks restlessly to and fro. "Elisha has come back, ma'am, an' I've made up my mind to go into the House!"

"Why, Mrs. Driffield, this *is* news! But why should you go into the House now that your daughter is back? Won't she live with you, and help you?"

"You see, ma'am, she have brought back a young man,—a sailor, I think, leastways a fishmonger—that is willin' to marry her if she'd got but a few bits o' things to start with. An' I thought I'd better let her have my bits o' sticks and go into the House. If I could see Elisha respectably joined together in holy matrimony, it wouldn't much matter what became o' me afterwards, would it, dear? And as you was the only friend I had, I thought I'd come an' tell you, an' then you'd know why I didn't call again. I'm sure I return you many thanks for all your kindness, and every one in this house, small and great."

"Mrs. Driffield," I say impulsively, with a choking somehow in my throat, "you used to have a pretty purple parasol. If you would like to sell it, I should be very glad to give you half-a-crown for it; you may want a little money to settle your affairs or take with you."

"Thank you, dear," says Mrs. Driffield, shaking her head from side to side, "thank you, but that's gone too! I did think I should like you to have had that,—shot violet it were, with old gold underneath—but I gave it over, with everythink else, to Elisha, and she just hollered out with pleasure when she saw it, and put it up over her head in my back parlour, for all the world like a baby. I told her there was nothing so unlucky as puttin' up an umbrella indoors; but she says her luck's turned, and she don't care

a snap now that she has a home of her own. So once more thanking you, dear, I must be going."

Passing by chance next day through the street where Mrs. Driffield had struggled so long alone, I saw a hand-truck at her door, and a villainous-looking fellow,—who certainly was not a sailor, and as for a fishmonger, I doubt if he were so honest a man—loading it with her "bits o' sticks."

Elisha came bawling down the steps, hurling a feather-bed before her, which was piled on the barrow, and then the cavalcade started. As they turned the corner a drizzle of rain was beginning, and Elisha unfurled a purple parasol over the load. I could only hope they were "respectably joined together," as Mrs. Driffield quoted it, and had not got the furniture on false pretences.

THE FOOTSTEP OF DEATH.

Godliness is great riches if a man be content with what he hath.

THESE words invariably carry me back in the spirit to a certain avenue of *shesham* trees I knew in India; an avenue six miles long, leading through barren sandy levels to the river which divided civilisation from the frontier wilds; an avenue like the aisle of a great cathedral with tall straight trunks for columns, and ribbed branches sweeping up into a vaulted roof set with starry glints of sunshine among the green fretwork of the leaves. Many a time as I walked my horse over its chequered pavement of shade and shine I have looked out sideways on the yellow glare of noon beyond in grateful remembrance of the man who,—Heaven knows when!—planted this refuge for unborn generations of travellers. Not a bad monument to leave behind one among forgetful humanity.

The avenue itself, for all its contenting shade, had nothing to do with the text which brings it to memory; that co-ordination being due to an old *fakier* who sate at the river end, where, without even a warning break, the aisle ended in a dazzling glare of sand-bank. This sudden change no doubt accounted for the fact that on emerging from the shade I always seemed to see a faint, half-hearted mirage of the still unseen river beyond. An elusive mirage, distinct in the first surprise of its discovery, vanishing when the attention sought for it. Altogether a disturbing phenomenon, refusing to be verified; for the only man who could have spoken positively on the subject was the old *fakier*, and he was stone-blind. His face gave evidence of the cause in the curious puffiness and want of ex-

pression which confluent small-pox often leaves behind it. In this case it had played a sorrier jest with the human face divine than usual, by placing a flat bloated mask wearing a perpetual smirk of content on the top of a mere anatomy of a body. The result was odd. For the rest a very ordinary *fakier*, cleaner than most by reason of the reed broom at his side, which proclaimed him a member of the sweeper, or lowest, caste; in other words, one of those who at least gain from their degradation the possibility of living cleanly without the aid of others. There are many striking points about our Indian Empire; none perhaps more so, and yet less considered, than the disabilities which caste brings in its train; the impossibility, for instance, of having your floor swept unless Providence provides a man made on purpose. My *fakier*, however, was of those to whom cleanliness and not godliness is the reason of existence.

That was why his appeal for alms, while it took a religious turn as was necessary, displayed also a truly catholic toleration. It consisted of a single monotonous cry: "In the name of your own Saint,"—or, as it might be translated, "In the name of your own God." It thrilled me oddly every time I heard it by its contented acquiescence in the fact that the scavenger's god was not a name wherewith to conjure charity. What then? The passer-by could give in the name of his particular deity and let the minor prophets go.

The plan seemed successful, for the wooden bowl, placed within the clean-swept ring, bordered by its edging of dust or mud, wherein he sate winter and summer, was never empty, and his

cry, if monotonous, was cheerful. Not ten yards from his station beneath the last tree, the road ended in a deep cutting, through which a low-level bed of water flowed to irrigate a basin of alluvial land to the south; but a track, made passable for carts by tiger-grass laid athwart the yielding sand, skirted the cut to reach a ford higher up. A stiff bit for the straining bullocks, so all save the drivers took the short cut by the plank serving as a footbridge. It served also as a warning to the blind *fakcer*, without which many a possible contributor to the bowl might have passed unheard and unsolicited over the soft sand. As it was, the first creak of the plank provoked his cry.

It was not, however, till I had passed the old man many times in my frequent journeyings across the river that I noticed two peculiarities in his method. He never begged of me or any other European who chanced that way, nor of those coming from the city to the river. The latter might be partly set down to the fact that from his position he could not hear their footsteps on the bridge till after they had passed; but the former seemed unaccountable; and one day when the red-funnelled steam ferry-boat, which set its surroundings so utterly at defiance, was late, I questioned him on the subject.

"You lose custom, surely, by seeking the shade?" I began. "If you were at the other side of the cut you would catch those who come from the city. They are the richest."

As he turned his closed eyes towards me with a grave obeisance which did not match the jaunty content of his mask, he looked,—sitting in the centre of his swept circle—ludicrously like one of those penwipers young ladies make for charity bazaars.

"The Presence mistakes," he replied. "Those who come from the town have empty wallets. 'Tis those who come from the wilderness who give."

"But you never beg of me, whether I go or come. Why is that?"

"I take no money, *Huzoor*; it is of no use to me. The Sahibs carry no food with them; not even tobacco, only cheroots."

The evident regret in the latter half of his sentence amused me. "'Tis you who mistake, *fakcer-jit*," I replied, taking out my pouch. "I am of those who smoke pipes. And now tell me why you refuse money; most of your kind are not so self-denying."

"That is easy to explain. Some cannot eat what is given; with me it is the other way. As my lord knows, we dust-like ones eat most things your God has made. But we cannot eat money, perhaps because He did not make it,—so the *padres* say."

"Ah! you are learned; but you can always buy."

"Begging is easier. See! my bowl is full, and the munificent offering of the Presence is enough for two pipes. What more do I want?"

Viewed from his standpoint the question was a hard one to answer. The sun warmed him, the leaves sheltered him, the passers-by nourished him, all apparently to his utmost satisfaction. I felt instinctively that the state of his mind was the only refuge for the upholders of civilisation, and a high standard of comfort. So I asked him what he thought about all day long. His reply brought total eclipse to all my lights.

"*Huzoor!*" he said gravely, "I meditate on the Beauty of Holiness."

It was then that the text already quoted became indissolubly mixed up with the spreading *shesham* branches, the glare beyond, and that life-sized penwiper in the foreground. I whistled the refrain of a music-hall song and pretended to light my pipe. "How long have you been here?" I asked, after a time, during which he sat still as a graven image with his closed eyes towards the uncertain mirage of the river.

"'Tis nigh on thirty years, my lord, since I have been waiting."

"Waiting for what?"

"For the Footstep of Death,—hark!"

he paused suddenly, and a tremor came to his closed eyelids as he gave the cry: "In the name of your God!"

The next instant a faint creak told me that the first passenger from the newly arrived ferry-boat had set foot on the bridge. "You have quick ears, *fakcer-ji*," I remarked.

"I live on footsteps, my lord."

"And when the Footstep of Death comes you will die of one, I presume!"

He turned his face towards me quickly; it gave me quite a shock to find a pair of clear, light-brown eyes looking at, or rather beyond, me. From his constantly closed lids I had imagined that,—as is so often the case in small-pox—the organs of sight were hopelessly diseased or altogether destroyed; indeed, I had been grateful for the concealment of a defect out of which many beggars would have made capital. But these eyes were apparently as perfect as my own, and extraordinarily clear and bright; so clear that it seemed to me as if they did not even hold a shadow of the world around them. The surprise made me forget my first question in another.

"*Huzoor!*" he replied, "I am quite blind. The Light came from the sky one day and removed the Light I had before. It was a bad thunderstorm, *Huzoor*; at least, being the last this slave saw, he deems it bad. But it is time the Great Judge took his exalted presence to yonder snorting demon of a boat, for it is ill-mannered, waiting for none. God knows wherefore it should hurry so. The river remains always, and sooner or later the screeching thing sticks on a sandbank."

"True enough," I replied, laughing. "Well! *salaam, fakcer-ji*."

"*Salaam*, Shelter of the World. May the God of gods elevate your honour to the post of Lieutenant-Governor without delay."

After this I often stopped to say a few words to the old man and give him a pipeful of tobacco. For the ferry-boat fulfilled his prophecy of its future to a nicety, by acquiring inti-

mate acquaintance with every shallow in the river; a habit fatal to punctuality. It was an odd sight lying out, so trim and smart, in the wastes of sand and water. Red funnels standing up from among Beloochees and their camels, bullocks scared by the plough, *zenana*-women huddled in helpless white heaps, wild frontiersmen squatted on the saddle-bags with which a sham orientalism has filled our London drawing-rooms. Here and there a dejected half-caste or a specimen of young India brimful of *The Spectator*. Over all, on the bridge, Captain Ram Baksh struggling with a double nature, represented on the one side by his nautical pea-coat, on the other by his baggy native trousers. "Ease her! stop her! hard astern! full speed ahead!" All the shibboleths, even to the monotonous "*ba-lamar-do* (by the mark two)" of the leadsmen forrards. Then, suddenly, overboard goes science and with it a score of lascars and passengers, who, knee-deep in the ruddy stream, set their backs lazily against the side, and the steam ferry-boat *Pioneer*, built at Barrow-in-Furness with all the latest improvements, sidles off her sandbank in the good old legitimate way sanctioned by centuries of river usage. To return, however, to *fakcer-ji*. I found him as full of trite piety as a copy-book, and yet for all that the fragments of his history, with which he interlarded these common-places, seemed to me well worth consideration. Imagine a man born of a long line of those who have swept the way for princes; who have, as it were, prepared God's earth for over-refined footsteps. That, briefly, had been *fakcer-ji's* inheritance before he began to wait for the Footstep of Death. Whatever it may do to the imagination of others, the position appealed to mine strongly, the more so because, while speaking freely enough about the family of decayed kings to whom he and his forbears had belonged, and of the ruined palace they still possessed in the oldest part of the city, he was

singularly reticent as to the cause which had turned him into a religious beggar. For the rest he waited in godliness and contentment (or so he assured me) for the Footstep of Death.

The phrase grew to be quite a catch-word between us. "Not come yet, *fakcer-jî*?" I would call as I trotted past after a few days' absence.

"*Huzoor*! I am still waiting. It will come some time."

One night in the rains word came from a contractor over the water that a new canal-dam of mine showed signs of giving, and, anxious to be on the spot, I set off at once to catch the midnight ferry-boat. I shall not soon forget that ride through the *shesham* aisle. The floods were out, and for the best part of the way a level sheet of water gleaming in the moonlight lay close up to the embankment of the avenue, which seemed more than ever like a dim colonnade leading to an unseen Holy of Holies. Not a breath of wind, not a sound save the rustle of birds in the branches overhead, and suddenly, causelessly, a snatch of song hushed in its first notes, as if the singer found it too light for sleep, too dark for song. The beat of my horse's feet seemed to keep time with the stars twinkling through the leaves.

I was met at the road's end by the unwelcome news that at least two hours must elapse ere the *Pioneer* could be got off a newly-invented mud-bank which the river had maliciously placed in a totally unexpected place. Still more unwelcome was the discovery that, in my hurry, I had left my tobacco-pouch behind me. Nothing could be done save to send my groom back with the pony and instructions for immediate return with the forgotten luxury. After which I strolled over towards my friend the *fakcer*, who sate ghostlike in the moonlight with his bowl full to the brim in front of him. "That snorting devil behaves worse every day," he said fervently; "but if the Shelter of the Poor will tarry a twinkling I will sweep him

a spot suitable for his exalted presence."

Blind as he was, his dexterous broom had traced another circle of cleanliness in a trice, a new reed-mat, no bigger than a handkerchief, was placed in the centre, and I was being invited to ornament just such another penwiper as the *fakcer* occupied himself. "Mercy," he continued, as I took my seat, shifting the mat so as to be able to lean my back against the tree, "blesses both him who gives, and those who take." Even Shakespeare, it will be observed, yields at times to platitude. "For see," he added solemnly, producing something from a hollow in the root, "the Presence's own tobacco returns to the Presence's pipe."

Sure enough it was genuine Golden Cloud, and the relief overpowered me. There I was after a space, half-lying, half-sitting in the clean warm sand, my hands clasped at the back of my head as I looked up into the shimmering light and shade of the leaves.

"Upon my soul I envy you, *fakcer-jî*. We who go to bed at set times and seasons don't know the world we live in."

"Religion is its own reward," remarked the graven image beside me, for he had gone back to his penwiper by this time. But I was talking more to myself than to him, in the half-drowsy excitement of physical pleasure, so I went on unheeding.

"Was there ever such a night since the one Jessica looked upon! and what a scent there is in the air,—orange blossoms or something!"

"It is a tree further up the water-cut, *Huzoor*, a hill tree. The river may have brought the seed; it happens so sometimes. Or the birds may have brought it from the city. There was a tree of the kind in a garden there. A big tree with large white flowers; so large that you can hear them fall."

The graven image sat so still with its face to the river, that it seemed to me as if the voice I heard could not

belong to it. A dreamy sense of unreality added to my drowsy enjoyment of the surroundings.

"Magnolia," I murmured sleepily; "a flower to dream about,—hullo! what's that?"

A faint footfall as of some one passing down an echoing passage, loud, louder, loudest, making me start up, wide awake, as the *fakcer's* cry rose on the still air: "In the name of your God!"

Some one was passing the bridge from the river, and after adding his mite to the bowl, went on his way.

"It is the echo, *Huzoor*," explained the old man, answering my start of surprise. "The tree behind us is hollow and the cut is deep. Besides, to night the water runs deep and dark as Death because of the flood. The step is always louder then."

"No wonder you hear so quickly," I replied, sinking back again to my comfort. "I thought it must be the Footstep of Death at least."

He had turned towards me, and in the moonlight I could see those clear eyes of his shining as if the light had come into them again.

"Not yet, *Huzoor*! But it may be the next one for all we know."

What a gruesome idea! Hark! There it was again; loud, louder, loudest, and then silence.

"That came from the city, *Huzoor*. It comes and goes often, for the lawcourts have it in grip. Perhaps that is worse than Death."

"Then you recognise footsteps?"

"Surely. No two men walk the same; a footstep is as a face. Sometimes after long years it comes back, and then you know it has passed before."

"Do they generally come back?"

"Those from the city go back sooner or later unless Death takes them. Those from the wilderness do not always return. The city holds them fast, in the palace or in the gutter."

Again the voice seemed to me not to belong to the still figure beside me.

"It makes a devilish noise I admit," I said, half to myself; "but——"

"Perhaps if the *Huzoor* listened for Death as I do he might keep awake. Or perhaps if my lord pleases I might tell him a story of footsteps to drive the idle dreams from his brain till the hour of that snorting demon comes in due time?"

"Go ahead," said I briefly as I looked up at the stars.

So he began. "It's a small story, *Huzoor*. A tale of footsteps from beginning to end, for I am blind. Yet life was not always listening. They used to say that Cheytu had the longest sight, the longest legs, and the longest wind of any boy of his age. I was Cheytu." He paused, and I watched a dancing shadow of a leaf till he went on. "The little Princess said Cheytu had the longest tongue too, for I used to sit in the far corner by the pillar beyond her carpet and tell her stories. She used to call for Cheytu all day long. 'Cheytu, smooth the ground for Aimna's feet'—'Cheytu, sweep the dead flowers from Aimna's path'—'Cheytu, fan the flies from Aimna's doll,'—for naturally, *Huzoor*, Cheytu the sweeper did not fan the flies from the little Princess herself; that was not his work. I belonged to her footsteps. I was up before dawn sweeping the arcades of the old house ready for them, and late at night it was my work to gather the dust of them and the dead flowers she had played with, and bury them away in the garden out of sight."

A dim perception that this was strange talk for a sweeper made me murmur sleepily, "That was very romantic of you, Cheytu." On the other hand it fitted my environment so admirably that the surprise passed almost as it came.

"She was a real Princess, the daughter of Kings who had been,—God knows when! It is written doubtless somewhere. Yes! a real Princess, though she could barely walk, and the track of her little feet was often broken by hand-marks in

the dust. For naturally, *Huzoor*, the dust might help her, but not I, Cheytu, who swept it for her steps. That was my task till the day of the thunderstorm. The house seemed dead of the heat. Not a breath of life anywhere, so at sundown they set her to sleep on the topmost roof under the open sky. Her nurse, full of frailty as women are, crept down while the child slept, to work evil to mankind as women will. *Huzoor*, it was a bad storm. The red clouds had hung over us all day long, joining the red dust from below, so that it came unawares at last, splitting the air and sending a great ladder of light down the roof.

"*Aimna! Aimna!*" cried some one. I was up first and had her in my arms; for see you, *Huzoor*, it was life or death, and the dead belong to us whether they be kings or slaves. It was out on the bare steps, and she sleeping sound as children sleep, that the light came. The light of a thousand days in my eyes and on her face. It was the last thing I saw, *Huzoor*; the very last thing Cheytu the sweeper ever saw.

"But I could hear. I could hear her calling and I knew how her face must be changing by the change in her voice. And then one day I found myself sweeping the house against her wedding feast; heard her crying amongst her girl friends in the inner room. What then? Girls always cry at their weddings. I went with her, of course, to the new life because I had swept the way for her ever since she could walk, and she needed me more than ever in a strange house. It was a fine rich house, with marble floors and a marble summerhouse on the roof above her rooms. People said she had made a good bargain with her beauty; perhaps, but that child's face that I saw in the light was worth more than money, *Huzoor*. She had ceased crying by this time, for she had plenty to amuse her. Singers and players, and better story-tellers than Cheytu the sweeper. It was but fair,

for look you, her man had many more wives to amuse him. I used to hear the rustle of her long silk garments, the tinkle of her ornaments, and the cadence of her laughter. Girls ought to laugh, *Huzoor*, and it was spring time; what we natives call spring, when the rain turns dry sand to grass and the roses race the jasmine for the first blossom. The tree your honour called magnolia grew in the women's court, and some of the branches spread over the marble summerhouse almost hiding it from below. Others again formed a screen against the blank white wall of the next house. The flowers smelt so strong that I wondered how she could bear to sleep amongst them in the summerhouse. Even in my place below on the stones of the courtyard they kept me awake. People said I had fever, but it was not that; only the scent of the flowers. I lay awake one dark, starless night, and then I first heard the footstep, if it was a footstep. Loud, louder, loudest; then a silence save for the patter of the falling flowers. I heard it often after that, and always when it had passed the flowers fell. They fell about the summerhouse too, and in the morning I used to sweep them into a heap and fling them over the parapet. But one day, *Huzoor*, they fell close at hand, and my groping fingers seeking the cause found a plank placed bridge-wise amongst the branches. *Huzoor!* was there any wonder the flowers fell all crushed and broken? That night I listened again, and again the footsteps came amid a shower of blossoms. What was to be done? Her women were as women are, and the others were as jealous already. Next day when I went to sweep I strewed the fallen flowers thick, thick as a carpet round her bed; for she had quick wits I knew.

"*'Cheytu! Cheytu!'*"

"The old call came as I knew it would, and thinking of that little child's face in the light I went up to her boldly.

"'My Princess,' I said in reply to her question as I bent over the flowers, 'tis the footstep makes them fall so thick. If it is your pleasure I will bid it cease. They may hurt your feet.'

"I knew from her silence she understood. Suddenly she laughed; such a girl's laugh.

"'Flowers are soft to tread upon, Cheytu. Go! you need sweep for me no more.'

"I laughed too as I went. Not sweep for her when she only knew God's earth after I had made it ready for her feet! It was a woman's idle word, but woman-like she would think and see wisdom for herself.

"That night I listened once more. The footstep must come once I knew; just once, and after that wisdom and safety. *Huzoor!* it came, and the flowers fell softly. But wisdom was too late. I tried to get at her to save her from their pitiless justice. I heard her cries for mercy; I heard her cry even for Cheytu the sweeper before they flung me from the steps where the twinkling lights went up and down as if the very stars from the sky had come to spy on her. What did they do to her while I lay crushed among the crushed flowers? Who knows? It is often done, my lord, behind the walls. She died; that is all I know, that is all I cared for. When I came back to life she was dead and the footstep had fled from revenge. It had friends over the Border where it could pause in safety till the tale was forgotten. Such things are forgotten quickly, my lord, because the revenge must be secret as the wrong; else it is shame, and shame must not come nigh good families. But the blind do not forget easily; perhaps they have less to remember. Could I forget the child's face in the light? As I told the Presence, those who go from the city come back to it sooner or later unless Death takes them first. So I wait for the Footstep—hark!"

Loud—louder—loudest: "In the name of your own God."

* * * *

Did I wake with the cry? Or did I only open my eyes to see a glimmer of dawn paling the sky, the birds shifting in the branches, the old man seated bolt upright in his penwiper.

"That was the first passenger, *Huzoor,*" he said quietly. "The boat has come. It is time your honour conferred dignity on ill manners by joining it."

"But the Footstep! the Princess! you were telling me just now——"

"What does a sweeper know of princesses, my lord? The Presence slept, and doubtless he dreamed dreams. The tobacco——"

He paused. "Well," said I curiously. "*Huzoor!* this slave steeps his tobacco in the sleep-compeller. It gives great contentment."

I looked down at my pipe. It was but half smoked through. Was this really the explanation?

"But the echo?" I protested. "I heard it but now."

"Of a truth there is an echo. That is not a dream. For the rest it is well. The time has passed swiftly, the *Huzoor* is rested, his servant has returned, the boat has come—all in contentment. The Shelter of the World can proceed on his journey in peace, and return in peace."

"Unless the Footstep of Death overtakes me meanwhile," said I but half satisfied.

"*Huzoor!* It never overtakes the just. Death and the righteous look at each other in the face as friends. When the Footstep comes I will go to meet it, and so will you. Hark! the demon screeches. Peace go with you, my lord."

About a year after this the daily police reports brought me the news that my friend the old *fakeer* had been found dead in the water-cut. An unusually heavy flood had undermined the banks and loosened the bridge; it must have fallen while the old man was on it, for his body was jammed against the plank which had stuck across the channel a little way down the stream. He had kept

his word and gone to meet the Footstep. A certain unsatisfied curiosity, which had never quite left me since that night in the rains, made me accompany the doctor when, as in duty bound, he went to the dead-house to examine the body. The smiling mask was unchanged, but the eyes were open, and looked somehow less empty dead than in the almost terrible clearness of life. The right hand was fast clenched over something.

"Only a crushed magnolia blossom," said the doctor, gently unclasping the dead fingers. "Poor beggar! it must have been floating in the water,—there's a tree up the cut; I've often smelt it from the road. Drowning men,—you know the rest."

Did I? The coincidence was, to

say the least of it, curious. It became more curious still when, three weeks afterwards, the unrecognisable body of a man was found half buried in the silt left in the alluvial basin by the subsiding floods; a man of more than middle age, whose right hand was clenched tight, over nothing.

So the question remains. Did I dream that night, or did the Footstep of Death bring revenge when it came over the bridge at last? I have never been able to decide; and the only thing which remains sure is the figure of the old *fakcer* with blind eyes, looking out on the uncertain mirage of the river waiting in godliness and contentment,—for what?

HAMPTON COURT.¹

FEW of our historic buildings recall the names of their founders as inevitably as Hampton Court suggests the name of Thomas Wolsey. We may think of Windsor Castle or the Tower of London without thinking of William the Conqueror or Julius Cæsar; we may occasionally forget that Westminster Hall was first raised by Rufus, or that St. James's was originally built by Henry VIII.; but no one whose thoughts are turned for a few moments to Hampton Court ever fails to remember that it was created by the son of the Ipswich tradesman. There is no more striking figure in English history than the great Cardinal who ruled the kingdom for nearly twenty years, and whose aims, even when they cannot be called lofty, were always extended and magnificent. Mr. Law, who has recently completed his valuable *History of Hampton Court*, does full justice to Wolsey's character and conceptions. When he was established in power, the Emperor Charles and Francis I. contended for his friendship, and his official emoluments from Church and State were swelled by pensions from both these sovereigns. The income he enjoyed as Lord Chancellor and Primate of the Northern Province was very large. Besides this, the revenues of three sees whose holders were foreigners fell into his hands; he secured also the wealthy bishopric of Winchester, and the great Abbey of St. Albans. Endowed with such resources as these, this aspiring genius was able to lavish on his undertakings sums that

would have exhausted the treasury of many princes.

In January, 1515, the Knights Hospitallers of St. John granted a lease of their manor of Hampton Court for ninety-nine years to Thomas Wolsey, Archbishop of York, at a yearly rental of £50. The most reverend lessee was created Cardinal in September of the same year, and he resolved that the habitation which he had already begun to erect on his new possession should be worthy of his new dignities and ever-growing greatness. Mr. Law's careful and interesting volumes contain a full account of the rise, progress, and vicissitudes of the noble palace thus designed, and the narrative is embellished with abundant illustrations, which add greatly to the attractions of the work.

Wolsey's edifice consisted of five great courts, surrounded by public and private rooms, and provided with all the accessories of regal state and enjoyment. The great west front of the building, when first finished, presented an aspect very different from its present appearance. "The central gateway, now dwarfed to three stories, was then a grand and imposing Tudor gate-house, or square tower, five stories in height, with four corner octagonal turrets, which were capped by leaden cupolas adorned with crockets, pinnacles, and gilded vanes." The first court, which is still the largest quadrangle in the palace, led into a second, called the Clock Court, where the Cardinal had his private apartments. Here were placed medallion busts of Roman Emperors, which are sometimes erroneously stated to have been presents from Leo X. On the inner side of the gateway under the Clock Tower were displayed the Car-

¹ *The History of Hampton Court Palace*; by Ernest Law. In three volumes, illustrated with one hundred and thirty autotypes, etchings, engravings, maps and plans. London, 1885-91.

dinal's arms, which curiously enough were left undisturbed by Henry VIII. when he afterwards substituted his own arms and cognisances everywhere else. Wolsey's closet was draped with cloth of gold, the ceiling was fretted with gold; all his reception-rooms were equally resplendent, and the windows blazed with painted glass. Portions of the structure within these two courts belong also to Wolsey's edifice, but the inmost courts he probably did not live to finish, and most of the present buildings were erected at later dates. The Cardinal's hall, as we shall see, was pulled down by Henry VIII. on his taking possession, and the chapel was certainly remodelled, if not entirely rebuilt, by the same monarch. All things, however, considered, Mr. Law thinks that the original palace cannot have been much smaller than the existing one, which covers eight acres and has a thousand rooms.

All Wolsey's buildings were carefully drained by means of great brick sewers discharging into the Thames. The system adopted was so complete that it was never found needful to supersede or alter it till the year 1871, when modern rules of sanitation required the outfall into the river to be stopped. For the supply of his household Wolsey brought water of great purity from springs in Coombe Hill, a spot three miles distant, through leaden pipes laid under the bed of the Thames. On the embellishment and furnishing of his new habitation the Cardinal bestowed equal care and attention. Nothing was too great or too small for the grasp of his intellect. We may almost say, with the late Professor Brewer, that this great man could build a kitchen, or plan a college, or raise a tower as no man since has been able to do any of these things. And his taste was as comprehensive as his genius. If Quentin Matsys had a picture on the easel, Wolsey was ready to purchase it. If there was a curious clock, it was secured for him. His fondness for

tapestry amounted to a passion. Trusty agents ransacked the Continent, to procure choice sets of arras, new and old, for the rising palace. If the owner generally preferred Scriptural subjects, as became a prince of the Church, he also collected many hangings wrought with scenes from classic or medieval story. Thus, while the walls of one chamber set forth the history of Samuel or David or Esther, those of another glowed with the labours of Hercules, the woes of Priam, or the Romaunte of the Rose; in the rooms where he received visitors, the tapestries were changed once a week. No less than two hundred and eighty beds were provided for strangers, with superb canopies and curtains of silk or velvet. There were bedsteads of alabaster, quilts of down, and pillow-cases embroidered with silk and gold. The chairs of state were covered with cloth of gold; the tables and cabinets were of the most costly woods. Much of the splendid furniture was emblazoned with "My lord's arms"; everywhere was impressed the Cardinal's hat. The same magnificence appeared in the decorations and ornaments of the chapel. But the forty-four gorgeous copes of one suit, and the rest of the sacerdotal pomp displayed there were eclipsed by the majesty of Wolsey's secular equipment. The annual expenses of his household exceeded £30,000, an immense sum for those days. His retinue of five hundred persons, his kingly stud, his sumptuous open table are mentioned in every history. When he rode to and from Westminster in his character of Lord Chancellor, his mule was attended by a long train of nobles and knights on horseback; his pursuivant, ushers, and other officers led the way in rich liveries, while footmen with gilded pole-axes brought up the rear.

At Hampton Court the haughty Minister received the ambassadors of foreign Powers, and entertained them with regal luxury. From it, at the height of his power, he directed every department of the realm. While Eras-

mus declared that he was omnipotent, and the Venetian Giustinian that he was seven times greater than the Pope himself, Wolsey's enemy Skelton, in his satire *Why come ye not to Court?* asserts that "Hampton Court hath the pre-eminence." Undoubtedly the palace which was the most signal monument of the statesman's eminence assisted to hasten his decline. The jealousy of a monarch like Henry could only be kept down by the subject's watchful submission. At the very moment of his final disgrace, it was said that the King had no ill-will to the Cardinal, but a great desire for his remaining possessions. Mr. Law shows that so early as midsummer 1525 at least, Wolsey had made over to the Crown his interest in the manor of Hampton with the stately pile which he had raised and its priceless contents, though down to the time of his downfall he continued to make use of all as though still his own property. His biographer Cavendish describes a great feast which he made there, in October 1527, for a French embassy headed by the Grand Master Montmorency, whose retinue freely expressed their astonishment at the wonderful value of the hangings and plate. The banqueting-rooms were illuminated by innumerable candelabra of silver gilt. Supper was served to the sound of trumpets, and accompanied by a concert of music. But the host was not yet come, having been detained in the Court of Chancery by the hearing of a long cause. Before the second course he entered suddenly, booted and spurred, and sitting down in his riding-dress, made a brilliant display of the convivial talents which had first recommended him to the royal favour. This, however, was the last grand entertainment given by Wolsey at Hampton Court, and we find that from the beginning of 1528 the expense of the works then in progress was borne by the King. Yet the Cardinal remained in possession till July 1529, when he took a last leave of his beloved brick towers and courts. A few weeks later he was

deprived of the Great Seal, stripped of his goods, and ordered to quit York House for Esher Place, while his master installed himself at Hampton Court, accompanied by Anne Boleyn, who made herself daily more necessary to her royal admirer.

Henry took great delight in his new residence, and laid out large sums in enlarging and still further embellishing the fabric. He pulled down Wolsey's hall as insufficient for a royal mansion, erecting in its place the present Great Hall with its richly carved roof. His additions were not completed till the end of 1538, from which date the palace remained pretty well unaltered till the time of William III. In 1531 the Hospitallers granted to His Majesty the fee-simple of the manor in exchange for other messuages. Anne Boleyn passed her honeymoon here, and presided as Queen at a succession of banquets, masques, interludes, and sports. But Henry was already flirting with her maids of honour, and it was here that some time afterwards the new Queen surprised Jane Seymour sitting on his knee. The Queen's New Lodgings, which were begun for the unfortunate Anne, were completed for her successor. Scarcely had the workmen finished obliterating the badges and initials of Anne Boleyn and substituting those of Jane Seymour, than the palace witnessed the birth of Edward VI., and twelve days later the death of his mother. In the summer of 1540 Anne of Cleves was here awaiting her sentence of divorce. That pronounced, she removed to Richmond, and Catherine Howard was openly shown as Queen at Hampton Court. Here in July 1543 Catherine Parr was married and proclaimed Queen. While his vigour lasted Henry occupied his leisure with field-sports in the parks, which then, as now, consisted of two main divisions,—Bushey Park and the Home Park—separated from each other by the Kingston Road. When he became too corpulent to bear the exertion of frequent journeys to Windsor Forest, he pro-

cured an Act of Parliament ordaining that the manor of Hampton and an extensive tract of adjacent country should be enclosed in a wooden paling and created a deer forest or chase, under the name of Hampton Court Chase, all the game therein being preserved for the King's diversion. This high-handed measure, worthy of William the Conqueror, provoked loud complaints from the inhabitants of the various parishes appropriated, and in the next reign the deer and paling outside the parks were removed by order of the Privy Council, though the district is still nominally a Royal Chase under the authority of a Keeper appointed by the Crown.

As the King's life drew towards its close, his visits to the river-side palace became more prolonged. A picture, attributed to Holbein or one of his school, which still hangs in the Queen's Audience Chamber, shows Bluff Harry at this period seated in the midst of his family, his right hand resting on the shoulder of Prince Edward who stands by his father, while Catherine Parr sits on his left, and the two princesses, Mary and Elizabeth, are stationed on either side. When no longer capable of hunting, the King amused himself indoors with backgammon, shovelboard, and similar pastimes, at which, in wet weather and on long evenings, he staked and lost large sums. Here in 1543 and the following year he kept Christmas with great state, and it was perhaps on the latter occasion that the poetic Earl of Surrey, who was present, became enamoured of his fair Geraldine, of whom he says, "Hampton me taught to wish her first for mine."

More sombre associations are connected with the place in the two following reigns. Edward VI. was here with his uncle Somerset in the autumn of 1549, when the Protector received intelligence of the league formed against him by his enemies on the Council. It was from Hampton Court that the desperate statesman issued his proclamation calling on all loyal subjects

to come armed to the help of their sovereign; and when the confederates seized the Tower of London, he produced the Boy King, imploring the country folk to "be good to us and our uncle." But that same night Edward had to be hurried to Windsor, and a few days later the Protector was a prisoner. It was at Hampton Court that Edward in 1551 raised his uncle's triumphant rival to the dukedom of Northumberland, and the father of Jane Grey to the dukedom of Suffolk. Here Queen Mary and her Spanish Consort lived in great retirement after their marriage, winning little popularity: "The hall door within the Court was continually shut, so that no man might enter unless his errand were first known; which seemed strange to Englishmen that had not been used thereto." No less disgust was felt at the niggardly table kept by the happy pair. Instead of celebrating their union, as Henry had celebrated his numerous weddings, with liberal hospitality, they dined in private on dishes which the English reserved for fast-days. It was to Hampton Court that Mary withdrew for quiet in April 1555, when she was daily expecting to become a mother, and the despatches announcing her safe delivery were prepared and signed by the King and Queen "At our house of Hampton Court," though the time never came to fill in the blanks which had been left for the date, and the termination by which the unfinished word *fil* was to be made to serve for a boy or a girl as occasion should require. It was while the birth was still impatiently expected, and not in the previous winter as some authorities have stated, that Elizabeth was summoned from Woodstock to Hampton Court, and pressed to renounce the faith in which she had been educated. Here occurred the famous interview between the sisters when Philip was concealed behind the arras ready, as some have supposed, to protect Elizabeth against any unseemly violence from the Queen, but probably playing the more simple

part of an eavesdropper. Whatever were the feelings of the King and Queen, with this interview ended Elizabeth's imprisonment. Thenceforth she was treated as heiress to the throne, while Philip, after chafing four months at Hampton Court with his barren wife, took ship in August for the Netherlands.

Much of the scandal about Queen Elizabeth had its origin at Hampton Court, but during her long reign the palace was the scene of few important events. The Virgin Queen spent much time there with the husband of Amy Robsart while she was trifling with the early matrimonial schemes proposed to her by her Council or allies; but as time ran on, when she was not at Westminster, she preferred Windsor, Greenwich, or Richmond for her residence, and made only flying visits to the place where her mother had won and lost her crown. In 1562 Elizabeth was seized with small-pox at Hampton Court, and for some hours the greatest alarm prevailed among the friends of the Reformation. When six autumns later the Queen of Scots was a prisoner at Bolton Castle, and Elizabeth summoned to Hampton Court a great council of peers to hear the contents of the famous Casket read, and to decide on the charges against Mary respecting the murder of Darnley, it was the turn of the Romanists to feel despondent. After this down to the end of the century the annals of the place record nothing more interesting than Christmas festivities, with the usual round of balls, masquerades, and plays. A temporary theatre was fitted up in the Great Hall, but no permanent improvements or changes of much moment were made either in the buildings or parks. The interior of the palace is described by Paul Hentzner, who was in England shortly before the Queen's death. The German traveller speaks of two Presence Chambers and numerous other rooms shining with tapestry of gold, silver, and silk or velvet; of several royal beds, including, besides the

Queen's own bed of state, another, the tester of which had been worked by Anne Boleyn for Henry VIII., and a third in which Edward VI. was said to have been born and his mother to have died; of the Great Hall adorned with noble portraits and many rare curiosities. Everywhere gleamed rich hangings and cushions and quilts embroidered with the precious metals. The visitor saw also a cabinet called Paradise, "Where, besides that everything glitters so with silver, gold, and jewels as to dazzle one's eyes, there is a musical instrument made all of glass except the strings."

The next age, bringing its long train of political and religious controversies, was fitly ushered in by the Hampton Court Conference, which, having been called to reconcile two diverging ecclesiastical parties, ended by setting them hopelessly at variance. We need but allude in passing to this ill-judged attempt at enforcing union by royal dictation. "The Bishops," wrote Harrington, who was present, "said His Majesty spoke by the power of inspiration. I wist not what they meant; but the spirit was rather foul-mouthed." One good result however came from the Conference; a suggestion of the Puritan spokesman led to the preparation of the Authorised Version of the Bible. The change from the Tudors to the Stuarts became at once apparent in small things as well as great. Maladroit in every way, James incurred much odium and some ridicule by the selfishness with which, in season and out of season, he pursued the royal pastime of stag-hunting at Hampton Court, and by his rage against spectators of his sport. The King, though he rode constantly to hounds, was so little of a real sportsman that he would take shots from behind a tree at the tame deer as they browsed in the shade. Anne of Denmark was celebrated by Ben Jonson as the "Huntress Queen," and a curious painting of her in that character is still to be seen at Hampton Court; but so far was she from being a Diana

that on one occasion she mistook her mark, and shot her husband's favourite hound. Her health broke down in the autumn of 1618, and though on Christmas Day she was able to attend "a whole sermon in the chamber next Paradise," she took to her bed not long afterwards, and died in the palace at the beginning of March.

Charles I. in the earlier part of his reign was often at Hampton Court, sometimes for pleasure, sometimes when the plague raged in London, but little happened to mark these visits. He enriched the palace with many works of art; when Henrietta Maria quarrelled with him there about her household, the French suite were expelled from England, bag and baggage; when the plague was worse than usual, orders were issued to forbid Londoners coming within ten miles of the place; Shakespeare's plays were performed in the Great Hall before the Court by actors who were the poet's contemporaries. Beyond such facts as these, there is nothing to notice until the eve of the Civil War. The Grand Remonstrance was presented to Charles at Hampton Court. Hither he fled from the tumults in the capital after the failure of his attempt to arrest the Five Members. So little had his coming been expected that the King and Queen, on their arrival, had to sleep in one room with their three eldest children. One more night Charles spent here a few weeks later, when conducting Henrietta from Windsor to Dover on her departure from England. At his next visit in August, 1647, he came as a prisoner, and remained three months under a very mild restraint, being suffered to keep his old servants about him, to receive visits from many Royalists, and to enjoy the society of his children, who were then at Sion House under the care of the Earl of Northumberland. He played a game in the tennis-court on the very day of his escape.

During the Commonwealth the manor of Hampton Court was sold by the Parliament; but the sale was after-

wards cancelled on the ground that the house was convenient for the retirement of persons employed in public affairs, and a year or two later it had passed into the possession of Oliver Cromwell, who thenceforth made the place one of his principal residences. In like manner the goods, furniture, and works of art were appraised and offered for sale. The splendid tapestries were valued at prices which even in the present day would be thought exorbitant; while the finest pictures of the collection were estimated at comparatively small sums. The famous Cartoons of Raphael, which had been purchased by Charles on the recommendation of Rubens, were set down at no more than £300. These, however, with some others of the finest paintings, were withdrawn from the catalogue by order of the Council of State; and at the end of a sale lasting nearly three years, several of the best tapestries were found to have been appropriated by the Lord Protector, who even hung his own bedroom with pieces representing the profane subject of Vulcan and Venus.

After the Restoration Hampton Court became again a royal residence. There the second Charles passed his honeymoon, and there he afterwards compelled his wife to receive Lady Castlemaine. But the fame of Wolsey's creation was now eclipsed by the superior splendour and commodiousness of Versailles. When the Revolution came William and Mary complained that, though the air of the place was good, the buildings had been much neglected, and were wanting in many of the conveniences of a modern palace. Under the royal direction Sir Christopher Wren demolished the old State Apartments inhabited by Henry VIII., and erected the long uniform southern and eastern fronts, towards the Thames and the gardens, on a model as remote as possible from the original design. The style adopted for the new edifice was the debased Renaissance then in vogue, which it was no easy task to harmonise even tolerably

with the remaining Tudor buildings. That the result was worthy of the architect's genius cannot be affirmed, but allowing for the difficulties with which he had to contend and the instructions by which he was cramped, it may be pronounced fairly successful. Wren's elevations are imposing from their extent, and the new rooms were stately and well-proportioned. Like the old quadrangles the additions are built of red bricks, but of a lighter colour, and with a larger use of stone in columns and dressings. The staircases and some of the principal chambers were decorated with ungraceful and gaudy frescoes by Verrio and his assistant Laguerre,—names which recall Pope's couplet :

On painted ceilings you devoutly stare,
Where sprawl the Saints of Verrio or
Laguerre.

More happily the delicate chisel of Grinling Gibbons was employed to execute the carvings. New gardens of spacious extent were laid out, adorned with fountains and provided with exquisite screens of wrought iron. An old separate building, called the Water Gallery, was fitted up for the Queen's use till the new palace should be complete, and was filled with a series of portraits by Kneller, known as the Hampton Court Beauties, which, after the Queen's death and the demolition of the Water Gallery, were removed to the main edifice, and are now in the room called King William's Presence Chamber. Also to gratify the Queen an orangery was formed, choice exotics were collected, and hothouses were built for their reception. When he lost her William forsook the palace for a time, and did not return till Whitehall was destroyed by fire, after which further improvements were made in the gardens, and the famous maze was formed. The designer, we are told, condemned this labyrinth for having only four stops, whereas he had given a plan for one with twenty. The seclusion of Hampton Court suited the taste of the moody Dutch King, and aided him to bear the pain of exile

from his favourite retreat in the sandy plain of Gelders. He posted thither, on his last return from the Hague, without touching London, and it was while hunting there a few weeks later that he met with the fall which caused his death.

Very early in the eighteenth century the palace and gardens became a popular resort of holiday-makers from London, who came down by road or river to see all they could, and to dine at the Toy, a famous hostelry which stood just without the western entrance, on the side opposite the site now occupied by the Mitre Hotel. Who does not know that the *Rape of the Lock* was written to heal a breach which had arisen between two families out of an incident that had taken place during an excursion of this kind? We are almost ashamed to quote, and yet we cannot refrain from quoting, the well-remembered lines :

Close by those meads, for ever crowned
with flowers,
Where Thames with pride surveys his
rising towers,
There stands a structure of majestic frame,
Which from the neighb'ring Hampton
takes its name.
Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall fore-
doo
Of foreign tyrants and of nymphs at home ;
Here thou great Anna ! whom three realms
obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take,—and some-
times tea.

The party had come by water :

But now secure the painted vessel glides,
The sunbeams trembling on the floating
tides :
While melting music steals upon the sky,
And softened sounds along the water die ;
Smooth flow the waves, the zephyrs gently
play,
Belinda smiled, and all the world was gay.

After dinner the friends sat down to a game of ombre, during which coffee was brought in ; then came the felonious assault and the catastrophe which produced the rupture :

The meeting points the sacred hair dis-
cover
From the fair head, for ever, and for ever !

Perhaps if one were asked to mention the liveliest period in the annals of Hampton Court, we should fix on a summer or two of the dulllest reign in English history. The first royal visit after the coming of the Guelphs gave indeed little promise of gaiety. Originally George I., like William III., preferred the palace as a retreat where he could escape from the unwelcome gaze of his subjects, and enjoy life after his own fashion with his foreign favourites. Thither accordingly he retired shortly after his arrival from Germany. The places formerly occupied by Portland and Albemarle were now more than filled by Mesdames Schulenberg and Kielmansegge, whom in course of time their lover created respectively Duchess of Kendal and Countess of Darlington. Of these two elderly, ill-favoured personages, the Duchess, extremely tall and spare of figure, became known to our rude forefathers as the Maypole, while the Countess, being, as Thackeray says, a large-sized noblewoman, was, with equal irreverence, denominated the Elephant and Castle. There is a legend that the walk under the wall of the tilt-yard near the palace gate, owes its name to these two ladies. Tradition tells that they used to pace up and down together beneath the elms and chestnuts there, while awaiting the King's return from exercise, and that it was hence called Frow Walk, afterwards corrupted into Frog Walk, the name which it bears to the present day. George would sit for hours with his pipe, watching this pair cut out figures in paper for his diversion, and would clap his hands with a shout of laughter whenever the Schulenberg succeeded in producing a recognisable likeness of some courtier or officer of State. At the end of the season his sacred Majesty returned to London by water, and only on these occasions did he care to appear in any state. Six footmen preceded his sedan to the river-side; six yeomen of the guard followed; then came the ruddled mistresses in chairs borne by servants

wearing the royal livery. The suite attended, and the party embarked in barges spread with crimson cloths, while from an accompanying boat French horns and clarionets filled the air with music.

But the German Elector, who had allowed nine months to pass before he took possession of his new throne, was as eager to return to Herrenhausen as ever William of Orange had been to revisit his beloved Loo. When he set out for Hanover in the summer of 1716, he appointed his son guardian of the realm and permitted him to reside at Hampton Court. The Prince and Princess took up their abode in the State Rooms recently inhabited by Queen Anne, the ceiling of whose bedchamber had just been painted by Thornhill, and there strove by a display of graciousness and hospitality to efface the disgust which the King's boorish behaviour had already excited. The most shining wits and beauties of that time were assembled at the new Court. There sparkled Philip Dormer, Lord Stanhope, afterwards the celebrated Earl of Chesterfield, who a year before had been appointed to a post about the Prince's person, and who at the age of twenty was acknowledged to be the most accomplished gentleman of his day. Thither also came Carr Lord Hervey, elder brother of the better known John Lord Hervey, and reckoned, as Horace Walpole reports, to have had superior parts. There too were to be seen Lord Scarborough, praised by Pope, and Marlborough's brother Charles, not yet the tedious and foppish General Churchill at whom the next generation laughed, but a gallant Colonel, with laurels still fresh, and "smart in repartee." The married ladies included Lady Walpole, wife of Sir Robert, and the Princess's two bedchamber-women, Mrs. Selwyn, mother of the witty George, and the much more important Mrs. Howard. It was at Hampton Court that Henrietta Howard, afterwards Countess of Suffolk, the friend and correspondent of Swift, Pope, and Gay, was first

recognised as the established mistress of the second George. This handsome, winning, sensible person helped to make the palace as pleasant as the German Frows had made it odious. The easy morality of the age could find only one fault in her :

When all the world conspires to praise her,
The woman's deaf, and does not hear.

But more attractive to modern taste than these older dames were the charming maids-of-honour who mingled with them in the parlour of the lady-in-waiting. Foremost among these smiled the lovely, lively Mary Bellenden, whom her contemporaries pronounced the most perfect creature they had ever known. She it was who, with arms folded before her, bade the amorous Prince stand off, and when he thought to tempt her by counting his money at her side, tossed the guineas on the floor, and springing away left his Royal Highness to gather them up alone. Hardly second to the Bellenden was her companion, the famous Molly Lepell, who seems after all to have made a more permanent impression. After being celebrated by Chesterfield and all the poets of her youth, she was complimented by Voltaire in the only English verses now extant from his pen, and to her in 1762 were dedicated the *Anecdotes of Painting*.

The season was filled with a varied round of amusements in which all these people took part. There were boating excursions, informal dinners, strolls in the gardens, games of bowls, flirtations (then called "frizelations") in shady retreats, and in the evenings cards or music, with pleasant supper-parties in Mrs. Howard's apartments which were known to her friends as the Swiss Cantons. The lovers of scandal noted afterwards that about this time Lady Walpole seemed too intimate with my Lord Carr, and that Horace Walpole, who was born next year, bore far more resemblance to the puny and sickly race of Hervey than he did to the burly and jovial

Prime Minister. Much the same society met again in the following summer, but with the difference that the old King was there to damp their enjoyment. Pope, in an often quoted letter dated September 1717, describes a visit he had recently paid to Hampton Court. "Mrs. Bellenden," he says, "and Mrs. Lepell took me into protection, contrary to the laws against harbouring papists, and gave me a dinner, with something I liked better, an opportunity of conversing with Mrs. Howard." But the King's presence had altered everything. The maids-of-honour declared that the monotony of their lives was unendurable. "And as a proof of it," adds the writer, "I need only tell you that Miss Lepell walked with me three or four hours by moonlight, and we met no creature of any quality but the King, who gave audience to the Vice-Chamberlain, all alone, under the garden-wall." In 1718 the jealous monarch had driven away his son and *cette diablesse Madame la Princesse*, who held an opposition Court at Richmond, while His Majesty, resolute for once to be gay, revived the old theatre in the Great Hall, bringing down Colley Cibber and his company to perform *Henry VIII.* and other plays before mixed audiences of invited guests. The differences between the rival Courts, however, were composed soon enough to enable the fair Bellenden and Lepell to revisit Hampton before the former wedded the heir to the dukedom of Argyll, and the latter, Pope's especial favourite, became the wife of the poet's particular aversion, John Lord Hervey. Both ladies cherished a fond recollection of happy days spent at Hampton Court. "I wish we were all in the Swiss Cantons again," writes Mrs. Campbell to Mrs. Howard; and some years later Lady Hervey, addressing the same correspondent, says: "I really believe a frizelation would be a surer means of restoring my spirits than the exercise and hartshorn I now make use of. I do not suppose that name

still exists ; but pray let me know if the thing itself does, or if they meet in the same cheerful manner to sup as formerly. Are ballads and epigrams the consequence of those meetings ? ”

The accounts of Hampton Court under George II. offer pictures much less agreeable. We see “The Queen’s chaplain mumbling through his morning office in the so-called private chapel, under the picture of the great Venus, with the door opened into the adjoining chamber, where the Queen is dressing, talking scandal to Lord Hervey, or uttering sneers at Mrs. Howard, who is kneeling with the basin at her mistress’s side.” We see the King come into the Gallery in the morning when the Queen is drinking chocolate, and abuse her for being always stuffing ; and then turn to the other members of his family and vent the rest of his ill-humour on them, scolding Princess Amelia for not hearing him, Princess Caroline for being so fat, and the Duke of Cumberland for standing awkwardly. We see the Princess of Wales, while hourly expecting her confinement, hurried secretly down stairs by her worthless husband Frederick, forced into a coach, though on the rack with pain, and driven off to London to be delivered at St. James’s. Of the general tenor of Court life in this reign we have a cabinet picture in a letter by Lord Hervey :

I will not trouble you with any account of our occupations at Hampton Court. No mill-horse ever went in a more constant track or a more unchanging circle ; so that by the assistance of an almanac for the day of the week, and a watch for the hour of the day, you may inform yourself fully, without any other intelligence but your memory, of every transaction within the verge of the Court. Walking, chaises, levées, and audiences fill the morning ; at night, the King plays at commerce or backgammon, and the Queen at quadrille, where poor Lady Charlotte runs her usual nightly gauntlet—the Queen pulling her hood, Mr. Schutz sputtering in her face, and the Princess Royal rapping her knuckles, all at a time. . . . The Duke of Grafton takes his nightly

opiate of lottery, and sleeps as usual between the Princesses Amelia and Carolina ; Lord Grantham strolls from room to room (as Dryden says), “Like some discontented ghost that oft appears, and is forbid to speak,” and stirs himself about as people stir a fire, not with any design, but in hopes to make it burn brisker ; which his lordship constantly does to no purpose, and yet tries as constantly as if it had ever once succeeded. At last the King comes up, the pool finishes, and every one has their dismissal.

George II. made some alterations in the fabric of the palace, completing and decorating some of Wren’s new building which had been left unfinished at the death of William III. The works were executed under the direction of Kent, a poor architect, who unfortunately was also commissioned to rebuild part of the old Clock Court, a task which he performed in a most unsatisfactory manner. After the death of Queen Caroline, George II. was little at Hampton Court, though now and then he would drive down to spend the day, accompanied by Lady Yarmouth and a small suite. “The royal party,” says Walpole, “went in coaches and six in the middle of the day, with heavy horse-guards kicking up the dust before them, dined, walked an hour in the garden, returned in the same dusty parade, and his Majesty fancied himself the most gallant and lively prince in Europe.” At other times the palace was open to the inspection of visitors pretty much as the State Apartments at Windsor are now. Walpole has a story that the Miss Gunnings in the first flush of their triumph, when crowds used to follow them in the streets, went to see Hampton Court, and hearing the housekeeper say to another company at the door of the Beauty Room, “This way, ladies, here are the Beauties,” flew into a passion, saying that they came to see the palace, not to be shown as a sight themselves.

From the accession of George III. Hampton Court finally ceased to be a residence of the sovereign. The State Apartments were dismantled and even

Raphael's Cartoons, which had hung for nearly seventy years in the gallery built expressly for them by Wren, were removed, first to Buckingham House, afterwards to Windsor, and were not returned till 1808. The gardens, however, were suffered to continue under the care of the famous Capability Brown, who had been appointed Royal Gardener at Hampton Court in 1750, and to whom is probably due the planting in 1769 of the famous vine which has so long been one of the sights of Hampton Court. It is said that the young King had conceived an invincible repugnance to the place from his ears having been once boxed there by his choleric grandfather. At any rate, he abandoned it altogether, and the whole building, with the exception of the State Rooms, was gradually divided into suites of apartments allotted by royal favour to private persons. In 1776 Samuel Johnson applied to the Lord Chamberlain for one of these suites, and of course met with a refusal. The rooms were granted, not to men of genius and literature, but to applicants who had interest at Court or some claim on the official charged with the distribution of them. Sometimes the recipients of the King's bounty left their lodgings untenanted for long periods, or even assumed the right of sub-letting them to others, and stringent regulations had to be made against such malpractices. At the

end of the century the palace enjoyed a transient glimmer of royalty from the presence of the Prince of Orange, who, driven from the Netherlands by the Revolution, occupied from 1793 to 1813 the vacated abode of English monarchy. In later days, residences in the precincts have been occasionally given to persons not connected with noble families. Thus Michael Faraday, in 1858, was granted the Crown house on the Green, which now bears his name, and which he occupied till his death in 1867.

In 1865, the superb iron screens in the gardens, together with much furniture and tapestry from the palace, were removed to the South Kensington Museum. At the same time the palace finally lost the Cartoons, these being transferred to the same institution, where despite remonstrance it appears to have been decided as we write that they are to remain.

Here we close this hasty sketch, which can necessarily give but an imperfect idea of the patient industry, the wide research, and the various interest of Mr. Law's volumes. We can only hope that it may at least induce such of our readers as have not yet done so to study them at first hand. The work has been clearly a labour of love; and we are pleased to think it likely to meet with a better reward than is perhaps the common lot of such labours.

A GOOD WORD FOR THE SPARROW.

I HAVE lived through three or four mad-dog panics. I remember a gentleman's housekeeper being bitten by a pampered pet dog which she was trying to make eat contrary to its inclination, persuading herself that the dog was mad (it was the time of one of these panics), becoming very ill, going to bed, persuading herself that she was suffering from hydrophobia, and barking accordingly (it was the correct thing to do in the circumstances), and yet getting well when the doctor (whom I knew) succeeded in persuading her that the dog might not have been mad after all. She lived for years afterwards. I remember a very valuable pointer being shot because it had the misfortune to be bitten by a dog reputed to be mad, which had snapped at a female who menaced it as an intruder with a stick, and in passing the pointer in its effort to escape just rased the skin with its teeth. I remember being told that two pigs said to have been bitten by one of these dogs-with-ill-names went mad, "barked like dogs," and were slain. Nay, I remember hearing that the young onions in a bed which was crossed by the said unlucky dog as it levanted after biting the pigs, went mad too, and showed it by jumping out of their places in the bed!—I never heard what their roots had to say to it—and departing this life in consequence, as sane onions would not have done. Nay, I even heard,—it was in the same county where I used to hear an unsuccessful attempt had been made to get the moon out of the water wherein she had been clearly seen by credible deponents—that the same dog bit a wheelbarrow in passing, and that it was thought safer to chain the wheelbarrow up. But that, I think, must have been of the nature

of making fun of some person or persons not named. But first and last, I think I have known of fifty to eighty dogs slain in the course of these panics, simply because they had got the bad name of having possibly been bitten by a possibly mad dog. And I am afraid my dear old familiar friend, the sparrow, has got a like bad name,—perhaps no more deserved than nineteen out of the twenty ill names those poor unlucky dogs had got.

We are told that he is a thief, a burglar, and a bully; that he takes action of ejectment without being backed by a legal writ; that he dispossesses the harmless martin of the snug mud domicile he has built for himself and partner; that he drives away the softer-billed birds, and banishes the weaker ones; that he damages the flower-seeds, and utterly ravages the labours of the kitchen-gardener; that he is such a ruffian that no bird of his own size dare attack him. Nay, even his personal looks, mien, and gestures show what a mean rascal he is; he is ugly and ill-plumaged, his movements are "graceless, heavy motions," and his note is a "monotonous chirp."

I wonder who is responsible for the charge of robinicide which hangs over the sparrow's head like a black fog over a smoky city. It is true he is made to vaunt himself of the deed; but I think, while it accounts for one of the divers ill names credited to him, still it must be looked upon as at least, what the Scottish Law Courts call, Not Proven. For, waiving the little difficulty of the bow and arrow, having still, and having had for well on to threescore years and ten, a very large and almost as intimate an acquaintance with both robins and sparrows, I have never once seen the latter

act as the aggressor in any quarrel between the two birds; but I have seen the robin attack the sparrow a hundred times, and again a hundred, and the latter turn tail,—rather ignominiously moreover, if the weights of the two parties be taken into account. Nay, even the meek, apologetic cuddy, or hedge-sparrow, holds its own if its house-brother so far forgets the dictates of prudence as to try and act the bully. And I am bound to say that in all my acquaintance with birds driven by stress of weather, or induced by the abundant and easily obtained supplies of food at my study window or on the terrace below my dining-room window, I have never seen my much-abused friend attempt to molest the stray chaffinch, larger tits, or any other bird less, or less powerfully armed than himself. Frankly, I do not hold with the doctrine that dubs him a bully. He is not half nor a quarter so much of a bully as the robin, and as regards the nuthatch, why, it is *Oliver Twist* matched against the Beadle. No doubt his motto, like that of other nature-led creatures, is practically, "Every one for himself and God for us all;" but I have never seen him act as if it was, "Nae halves or quarters! Haill o' my ain."

Certainly he is as independent a fellow as any bird I know. I see him sometimes in long-continued snow and persistent hard weather, on my terrace, coming and going, in parties of half-a-dozen, half-a-score, fifteen, or twenty. This year, though the snow was deep and the thermometer low, I have seldom seen more than six or eight in all. No doubt the ready explanation is that the truculent sparrow has driven him away. Still, that sounds strange; he can't very well have driven himself away! But he is not there in his wonted numbers, and he has not been in the ivy above, during the past nesting-season, in his wonted numbers; though there has been no sparrow-persecution here, nor anything that I know of calculated

to lessen their numbers. This seems to me to betoken not exactly that the sparrows are the active agents in the lessening of the numbers of small birds, but rather that they themselves are subject to the same decimating law as the house-martin, the beam-bird or spotted flycatcher, the white-throat, and the other little birds alleged nowadays to be the victims of the sparrow's high-handed behaviour and injurious usage.

But this is a digression. What I was saying was that the sparrow is an independent sort of fellow. One day, not far back, when putting down a few meat-bones, not very closely picked, had influenced the shivering and not too ravenous disposition of a pair of starlings for the customary bread-crumbs so far as to multiply the one pair by four, in flew the vivacious sparrows among the hungry lot, just as friendly as the members of a well-to-do club. They took no particular notice of the starlings, and the starlings returned the compliment. I did not even see a single nod exchanged. There seemed to me just the same sort of tacit understanding as exists among the occupants of the same table in a refreshment-room at a duly frequented railway-station. Put into our language, it would be: "Ah, you are hungry as well as we. All right; pitch in; there's plenty for all of us." As to hustling, pushing, pecking, driving away, I see ten times more of the real thing among my chickens and my pigeons when the food is just newly thrown down to them, than among the hungry birds I have fed all these years at my window.

I can fancy some one saying to me, with that peculiar and entirely pleasant tone and look adopted by the friend who intends to "shut you up" with his coming remark: "Ay, but how about those partitioned boxes you put up in the ivy for the accommodation of the starlings, some of which have been piratically appropriated by the sparrows; a proceeding which

leads, as you admit, to a good deal of 'differing' and bickering between the sparrows and the starlings when nests and eggs are about?" Well, I wonder, if it had so happened that instead of thinking a little about the sparrows as well as the starlings when those boxes were put up, I had thought entirely about the sparrows and not at all about the starlings and their little wants and comforts, whether it would have occurred to my friend, who is taking now "my contrary part," to charge the occupying starlings with being the aggressors and usurping plunderers. According to the universal bird-law,—the law of nature, in fact—the one species of bird has just as much right to those convenient apartments as the other. Even if I could have posted notices in "monotonous sparrow-chatter" and mocking-bird starling lingo, "These boxes are for the exclusive use of the starlings," or *vice versâ*, I could not thereby have annulled bird-law any more than King Canute could abrogate tide-law.

But this is what sentimental writers and observers (most fallaciously so-called) habitually ignore. From the vituperations lavished upon him the sparrow must be as systematic and as deliberate a scoundrel as the scientific burglar of to-day, and with precisely the same amount of active conscience. What he does is not only done too effectually and well, but it is done through want of principle, out of mere wickedness, regardless of the right, even unfeelingly or brutally. That is really what a great deal of the clap-trap about the sparrow in his dealings with other small birds comes to, if one takes the trouble to analyse it. He is not only a bully, an oppressor, a plunderer or usurper; but he knows he is, and continues to be so in spite of his conscience, and in fact revels in his own heartlessness.

But, for my own part, while I entertain somewhat grave doubts as to the recognition among birds generally of the dictates of morality, or any delicate perception of the difference between

right and wrong, and of the nice distinction to be drawn between *meum* and *tuum*, I own to a very great doubt whether the sparrow ought to be relegated to the "criminal classes" any more than the robin, the bunting, the chaffinch, the starling, the hedge-sparrow, or any other of the birds he is supposed to be injurious to—even the pathetically pictured martin itself. If either of these birds,—or any other birds whatsoever in fact—finds a site suitable for its nest, it annexes it forthwith, whatever and wherever it may be, and maintains it unless dispossessed by superior force. Thus, in the way of illustration merely, the beam-bird, or ordinary fly-catcher, has not only built its nest in the ivy almost by prescription sacred to sparrows and starlings and rarely occupied by less than twenty nests of the two species, but has, once at least, placed its nest in one of the compartments of my partitioned boxes fixed up in the midst of the said ivy. Nay, only last year I saw the nest of a pair of these birds in a sort of way-side private letter-box, into which it was customary to drop newspapers, notices, and matters of that kind. Yet, strange to say, the owner of the quasi-pillar-post in question, who showed me the nest, did not accuse the small intruders of burglarious, usurping, or even larcenous dispositions or intentions. Equally strange too it is that, although the shieldrake, the stockdove, and the puffin often, and quite as villainously as ever sparrow with a martin's nest, dispossess the poor inoffensive rabbit, without even a beak or claws to defend himself with, of his laboriously grubbed-out burrows, just simply to place their nests,—at least, their eggs (or egg)—therein, no one seems inclined to make moan for poor bunny or affix hard names to his plunderers. That treatment is reserved for the sparrow. Indeed, I should like to send one or two of the most virulent among the sparrow's backbiters and the most pathetic retailers of the story of his evil doings to the touching vignette on p. 365,

Vol. III., of Yarrell's *British Birds*, wherein an inoffensive rabbit is portrayed sitting up in the attitude of a little dog taught to beg, forepaws held out in suppliant-wise to a puffin with menacing beak and extra-hyper-passerine impudence, whose mate is actually winking (at least the picture makes it look so) as it occupies the entrance of the burrow her mate so unceremoniously declines to cede to its rightful owner. And this is the accompanying letter-press: "Rabbit-warrens are not unfrequent on our coasts, and where this happens, the puffins often contend with the rabbits for the possession of some of the burrows." Oh, wicked puffins! to reduce yourselves thus to the level of the thieving, violent, burglarious, rightful-owner-evicting, caitiff sparrow!

Indeed, if we make our reference to common sense and ordinary observation,—I don't mean "observation" of the amateur or popular description—I doubt very much if, within certain limits to be named presently, any of the standard allegations to the discredit of the sparrow, whether sentimental or matter-of-fact, would be held by an impartial jury to have been made out. By aid of a sort of flighty, haphazard, hand-to-mouth calculation (based, however, on local and personal knowledge of every farmstead, cottage, dwelling, hamlet, group of houses, or village, in my own wide parish, the only certainty about it being that it is under, not over the mark), I make the assumption that, at this present moment, there are in the parish not less than five hundred pairs,—or, to avoid misconception, I will say couples—of sparrows maintaining themselves from day to day. About these five hundred couples of sparrows, if I canvassed the parish round, going to every one of the multitudinous occupiers of land (considerably over one hundred in all), and asking each in his turn if he felt or thought that he had been sensibly damaged to the extent even of one penny by the dishonesty or other peccadilloes of the sparrows during the

months of October, November, December, and January just past, I do not believe that I should find one in every ten who either could or would answer my inquiry in the affirmative. If I were to go on with my catechism and ask if, during the past season, they had frequently or even occasionally seen or known of the sparrows as bullying and ill-using other birds, evicting them from their nests or nest-places, and usurping the same for themselves,—well, I think the reply would be in the form of a look and a laugh,—the look to see if I was joking, the laugh if they saw I was in earnest. But suppose I continue my calculation, and extend it to the county, and after that (as I in reality did) to the kingdom, I arrive at a total of certainly not under, and most likely greatly above, five millions of couples of sparrows, I wonder how many cases of violence, oppression, plunder, usurpation over and upon the weaker small birds could be alleged, and, much more, established. And suppose we carry the "wondering" further back, and carry it as far as the date of the first pathetic tale of evicting the martin, or any like villainy (or say for the last half century only), I wonder how many alleged,—not authenticated but alleged—instances could be produced. Is there one in a million,—I will not say one in ten thousand, one in a thousand, or one in a hundred—but is there one in a million, or one in ten millions, that has ever been heard of, or that possibly could be ferreted out?

Again, I wonder what we should think of an observing foreigner coming to England for the first time, and recording his observations, and prominent among them the note, founded on the fact that among the first natives he had seen on landing, two or three very swarthy individuals had come under his observation,—“The English are singularly dark in complexion; indeed, they might be described as tawny rather than fair!” Yet that is the way the sparrow's character is writ, wide generalisations based on

two or three, or a few separate instances.

When the charges against an accused person or party are found on examination to resolve themselves into random aspersions, or, at least, misrepresentations, it is usually held to be unnecessary to proceed very much further with the defence. Still there is the old saying, "Throw plenty of mud, and some of it is sure to stick;" and, as it seems to me, few birds have been so thoroughly well bespattered as the sparrow. Now I am not going to bring witnesses to his character, as I saw done the other day in a periodical, where the Reverends F. O. Morris, J. G. Wood, Mr. Harting, and others, were put into the witness-box, but simply to state what the general result of the observations made during a period of more than sixty-five years' close if not intimate acquaintance with him really is, as regards his character and conduct. I have seen a good deal of mischief done by him in wheat-fields when the grain was ripening. But even here I think it would be fairer to qualify the charges brought against him. According to my observation the area of his depredations is not as wide as the area of the wheat-lands said to be affected. He does not find the wheat-fields out, and fly to them on pilfering intent, in whatever part of the farmhold they may be situated. The fields near home, within easy flight of the farmstead, are the feeding-grounds that he affects; and even then it is not the whole breadth of the wheat-field that is injured by his plundering propensities. I remember when I was first big enough to be trusted with a gun (the adequate dimensions seem to have been attained in the course of my twelfth year) the field separated from my father's garden by the hedge out of which I shot my first blackbird was a wheat-field; and I think I never saw a field in which the still standing wheat was more damaged by the sparrows than that field. It was a large one, twelve or fifteen acres, the upper part of

it being not more than a hundred yards from the barnyard, stabling, and other offices. But the sparrows did not spread themselves indiscriminately over the whole area of the field; their attentions seemed to be limited to its upper part, and to the strip of it adjoining the aforesaid hedge. The "stetches" lying alongside that hedge (a nice bushy one, affording plentiful shelter for them if disturbed), and for about half down the side of the field, were verily and indeed subjected to "visitation of sparrows." The rest of the field was not touched. I have noticed the same thing again and again within the last half-score years; only here the inclosures are few of them of any great size, and even in these smaller fields the damage done is limited to the lands near the hedge. Yet to read the trades against the sparrow and his mischievous propensities, one is left to infer that it is the great total of the wheat-field that is harried and wasted by his unscrupulous maraudings.

Again, he is charged with dire mischief on the flower-beds, and still worse in the kitchen-garden. My experience in a large garden is that half-a-dozen slugs do more mischief among the springing flower-seeds than all the birds I have about the place, inclusive of the fifteen to twenty pair of sparrows that nest in my ivy, the starling-boxes, and the fir-trees near the house. In the kitchen-garden it is true much damage is (or would be, if I permitted it) done by the small birds; but I candidly own I should not have thought of incriminating the sparrows as the principal agents. What I have found is, that the three or four pairs of greenfinches which annually nest in my shrubs do five times the mischief in stooking up the germinating seeds they affect, than all my sparrows put together. I don't say these last are entirely innocent; but I do say that, if I had only the sparrows to contend with for the integrity of my drills of radish-seed, cabbage-seed, and that of other members of the

brassica family, I should not have to trouble myself greatly. As it is, I find that my mustard and cress, radishes, and so forth, are most safely and efficiently protected by a few lengths of wire pea-guards, as they are called, but which might just as well be termed seed-guards from their extensive utility when so employed. I don't deny that mischief is done by the sparrows, and in the garden as well as in the field; but I do say that they are credited with a great deal that they are not responsible for, and that very much of that mischief, by whatsoever birds effected, is easily preventible. My raspberries are under galvanised wire netting, and my strawberries, gooseberries, currants, red and black, are under herring-nets spread over rough frames, or low posts and wires; about a quarter of an acre of the old nets named having been procured at an expense of less than twenty-five shillings.

I have noted above that, during the last four months the sparrows here have been practically innocuous, and I may add that they are quite safe to continue so for some time to come, even in the ways that they are so unjustly blamed for. But in the meanwhile, as in the past, and prospectively, they are "maintaining themselves." But how? If they are not living on the farmers' corn or the gardeners' seed, how are they keeping body and soul together? The ornithologists say they live on grain, seeds, insects, soft vegetables, and so on. But if we eliminate the grain and garden-seeds, as we must for so great a portion of the year, what have they to fall back upon for their subsistence? Well, I go into a farmyard, and, as I let the gate clash behind me, I disturb a flock of five-and-twenty or thirty sparrows, which fly quickly up into some adjoining tree, or to the roofs of the farm-premises close at hand, from the middenstead or dunghill, or manure-heap, or from the long litter in the fold-yard, or some such like place; and, if they are not further disturbed, in a minute or two you see them

dropping down again by ones and twos to the place they had flown from. Disturb the surface of the middenstead or dunghill, always warm from the natural "heating" going on below, and even in the winter's day you see, if not "any amount," yet certainly no small amount of animal life in the shape of insects in some stage or other of their developments. Or see the flock of sparrows again at or near the barn-door, or wherever the dust and sweepings of the barn-floor are thrown out; anyone who knows the nature of that refuse,—that, for one grain of corn (probably imperfect at the best), it contains a hundred seeds of plants that are certainly no good to the farmer—knows also what the sparrows find there to reward their sharp-eyed and diligent search. That is the way the sparrow lives through no small part of the entire year, doing no appreciable harm, utilising what otherwise would be wasted, consuming what would, if left uninterfered with, have been more or less noxious to the land and its cultivators.

But further, I have the sparrow close under my eye and actual observation any day or every day, but especially in times of continued frost and snow, and also when the cares and occupations of the nesting, season are upon him. What I am told by the sentimental or perfunctory observer is one thing: what I see is another. I am told he is a bully and injurious to other small birds, that he is a feathered dog-in-the-manger and usurper, that he is bellicose and pugnacious. Of course he is pugnacious and fights; he would not be bird if it was otherwise. But it is with his own kind, and I really don't think that he is worse than other birds, or different from them in that respect. I have seen his neighbours in my ivy, the starlings, so resolute and so bitter in their hostilities one with the other, that they did not in the least mind my quoting good Dr. Watts to them from the window, but kept on with their scrimmage, grappled together in a

struggling, dishevelled feather-mass till I had had time to leave the room, tread the passage to the door, and go round most part of two sides of the house, stoop down and almost touch them with my outstretched hand, before they would give over and try to escape from a man's clutch. The sparrows, on the other hand, are much more amenable; the gentle reminder that

"Your little claws were never made
To scratch each other's eyes,"

addressed to them from the window, has generally a soothing effect. One day too, in this garden, I saw a triangular duel between three cock partridges for the love of one lady partridge, who sat calmly by on a flower-bed, taking no apparent interest in the issue of the fight. Perhaps she took a pride in being fought about; perhaps she was totally indifferent as to who got the mastery, thinking them all equally game birds. Anyway she sat there, stolid and immobile, save that now and then she preened a feather or two. But the three combatants fought heroically on, although I had advanced within four or five yards of them, and but for the fact that Miss P. felt shy at my approach, they might have been fighting still for all I can tell. Often too, in the old days before driving was, and when old grouse had the dominancy of the moor, I have seen from three to five old cocks holding a private tournament as to which of them should win some as yet undeclared moor-bird Queen of Beauty. They wheeled and they flew in wide circles, but never in a straight course, never heeding me or my gun, sometimes two only, then three or four, then all in a rough-and-tumble together, so that if I had been sanguinarily inclined I could have bagged the whole lot with a couple of well-considered shots. And certainly the sparrows are no exception to this bird-rule; though (probably from their more intimate acquaintance with humanity) they never lose their presence of mind in such

cases to the same extent as the starling, partridge, and grouse do.

But as to the rest of it: in the hungriest times I never see the sparrow attack his marrows in size or nearly so; and, what is very much more to the purpose, I never see, nor ever have seen, any signs of apprehension, of even striking recognition on the part of other small birds, occasioned by the advent of one or a dozen sparrows. If a cat or a kitten, or even a dog, shows itself anywhere near, up fly the birds, some into the ivy, some to the neighbouring thorn, the blackbirds and so on to more distant shelter. If I show myself abruptly at the window, much the same sort of stampede takes place. But the advent of a whole troop of sparrows makes not the slightest apparent difference to the company assembled, hedge-sparrows, chaffinches, robins, or what not. To be sure, if one of the new arrivals seems to affect a morsel to which a robin has already attached himself, or even appears likely to direct his attention that way, the robin, in nine cases out of ten, gives him a decided hint with his sharp bill to "keep out of that;" and I never yet saw even the pawkiest sparrow venture to stand up to the aggressive redbreast.

As to what I have seen well called "the ridiculous notion of his driving other birds away," or "displacing other birds more valuable than himself," or having to do with the diminution in the numbers of whitethroats, chaffinches and tits, and all the rest of that farrago of nonsense, I do not so much question the alleged facts on which it is made to depend, as deny them altogether. It is a fact that during the severe snowy weather we had a few weeks ago my usual number of pensioner sparrows had dwindled down to four or five couple in place of the pristine ten, twelve, or fifteen couple. But I do not allege it as a fact that these diminished numbers are due to a league of the starlings (who were present to the number of four pairs, contrary to all precedent), robins, euddies, chaffinches, &c., formed against

the sparrows; although if I did, it would be just as reasonable and just as well supported as these contrary statements under notice. I used to see great flocks of greenfinches, numbering many scores, sometimes even two or three hundreds, in our corn stubbles during the late autumn and early winter, while of late years the numbers are strangely reduced. But I think there is another way of accounting for such diminution, besides attributing it to any cause analogous to the alleged hostile action of the sparrow,—a cause too much more in harmony with the ascertained laws of nature. There are fewer slovenly farmers than there used to be. The greenfinches had, what a gardener of mine once termed, “a lavishing time of it” when whole farms had their cornfields yellow with charlock while the corn was growing, and strewn with its seed after harvest. And real observers know well enough that the questions of adequate supply of food and varying climatic influences have more to do with the presence or absence of birds in successive seasons than any such utterly inadequate causes as the alleged hostility or usurping aggression of some other, and especially only a single, species of birds.

As to my friend the sparrow’s “graceless, heavy motions,” his “monotonous chirp,” and (to put it gently) painful lack of beauty, one would think that ordinary dwellers in the country have neither ears nor eyes. And yet, I used to think that “monotonous” was hardly the word to apply when a dozen or two of sparrows were having, as they so frequently do have, a good lively little squabble among themselves. Their gamut seemed to me to be one of very considerable range. And besides, although I should be sorry to claim for them the merits of distinguished vocalists, still there are to my ear few country sounds more pleasant than the soft chirp of a flock of sparrows when the day with all its occupations and excitements is ended, and they are just cosily talking it over before bidding

good-night with mutual assurances of good feeling.

As to his vesture, it may not be a Joseph’s coat; nor am I quite sure that the matutinal walking-dress of a certain distinguished character when about to “visit his snug little farm,” entirely commends itself to my taste. Certainly the sparrow is not arrayed like that particular “old gentleman,” and, for one, I had rather that he was not. I have as delicately painted a portrait of the cock sparrow as any that, so far as I know, exists in any gallery, now before me; and as I look at the well-chosen shades of his costume, so harmoniously arranged and so good in themselves, chestnuts and browns thrown up and relieved by pure whites and good blacks, and himself so well groomed and nattily arranged, I think I admire him considerably more than the great majority of those Lords of the Bird Realm whose court-dress has given occasion to the somewhat sarcastic remark that “fine feathers make fine birds.” Of course I may be, very likely am, only manifesting my bad taste, or showing that I have “no eye for beauty.” Indeed, I am almost afraid that I may have no eye at all, because I have never yet perceived the “graceless, heavy motions” of these inferior and reprobate birds. In my blindness, or at least incapacity to see clearly, I had fancied that the movements of the “pert,” the “impudent” sparrow were the reverse of heavy; were, rather, active, brisk, alert. The motions of a toad are possibly somewhat graceless and heavy; nor would I call those of a gawky Cochín China fowl, as it hurries out of the way of an advancing vehicle, either light or graceful. But then, the imperfection of my vision is such that I cannot compare the quick, brisk flight of the sparrow, his natural, easy equilibrium as he alights, his perfect self-possession as with bright eye he surveys the scene, to the movements of either the chicken or the toad.

J. C. ATKINSON.

LORD BEAUPREY.

(IN THREE PARTS; PART I.)

I.

SOME reference had been made to Northerley, which was within an easy drive, and Firminger described how he had dined there the night before and had found a lot of people. Mrs. Ashbury, one of the two visitors, inquired who these people might be, and he mentioned half-a-dozen names, among which was that of young Raddle, which had been a good deal on people's lips, and even in the newspapers, on the occasion, still recent, of his stepping into the fortune, exceptionally vast even as the product of a patent glue, left him by a father whose ugly name on all the vacant spaces of the world had exasperated generations of men.

"Oh, is he there?" asked Mrs. Ashbury, in a tone which might have been taken as a vocal translation of the act of pricking up one's ears. She didn't hand on the information to her daughter, who was talking,—if a beauty of so few phrases could have been said to talk—with Mary Gosselin, but in the course of a few moments she put down her teacup with a little short, sharp movement, and, getting up, gave the girl a poke with her parasol. "Come, Maud, we must be stirring."

"You pay us a very short visit," said Mrs. Gosselin, intensely demure over the fine web of her knitting. Mrs. Ashbury looked hard for an instant into her bland eyes, then she gave poor Maud another poke. She alluded to a reason and expressed regrets; but she got her daughter into motion, and Guy Firminger passed through the garden with the two

ladies to put them into their carriage. Mrs. Ashbury protested particularly against any further escort. While he was absent the other mother and daughter, sitting together on their pretty lawn in the yellow light of the August afternoon, talked of the frightful way Maud Ashbury had "gone off," and of something else as to which there was more to say when their third visitor came back.

"Don't think me grossly inquisitive if I ask you where they told the coachman to drive," said Mary Gosselin as the young man dropped, near her, into a low wicker chair, stretching his long legs as if he were one of the family.

Firminger stared. "Upon my word I didn't particularly notice,—but I think the old lady said 'Home'!"

"There, mamma dear!" the girl exclaimed, triumphantly.

But Mrs. Gosselin only knitted on, persisting in profundity. She replied that "Home" was a feint, that Mrs. Ashbury would already have given another order, and that it was her wish to hurry off to Northerley that had made her keep them from going with her to the carriage, in which they would have seen her take a suspected direction. Mary explained to Guy Firminger that her mother had perceived poor Mrs. Ashbury to be frantic to reach the house at which she had heard that Mr. Raddle was staying. The young man stared again and wanted to know what she desired to do with Mr. Raddle. Mary replied that her mother would tell him what Mrs. Ashbury desired to do with poor Maud.

"What all Christian mothers desire," said Mrs. Gosselin; "only she doesn't know how."

"To marry the dear child to Mr. Raddle," Mary added, smiling.

Firminger stared more than ever. "Do you mean that you want to marry *your* dear child to that little cad?" he inquired of the elder lady.

"I speak of the general duty,—not of the particular case," said Mrs. Gosselin.

"Mamma *does* know how," Mary went on.

"Then why ain't you married?" asked Firminger.

"Because we're not acting, like the Ashburys, with injudicious precipitation. Isn't that about it?" the girl demanded, laughing, of her mother.

"Laugh at me, my dear, as much as you like; it's very lucky you've got me," Mrs. Gosselin declared.

"She means I can't manage for myself," said Mary to the visitor.

"What nonsense you talk," Mrs. Gosselin murmured, counting stitches.

"I can't, mamma, I can't; I admit it!" Mary continued.

"But injudicious precipitation and,—what's the other thing?—creeping prudence—seem to come out in very much the same place," the young man objected.

"Do you mean since I too wither on the tree?"

"It only comes back to saying how hard it is, nowadays, to marry one's daughters," said the lucid Mrs. Gosselin, saving Firminger, however, the trouble of an ingenious answer. "I don't contend that, at the best, it's easy."

But Guy Firminger would not have struck you as capable of much conversational effort as he lounged there in the summer softness, with ironic familiarities, like one of the old friends who rarely deviate into sincerity. He was a robust but loose-limbed young man, with a well-shaped head and a smooth, fair, kind face. He was in knickerbockers, and his clothes, which had seen service, were

composed of articles that didn't match. His laced boots were dusty,—he had evidently walked a certain distance; an indication confirmed by the lingering, sociable way in which, in his basket-seat, he tilted himself towards Mary Gosselin. It pointed to a pleasant reason for a long walk. This young lady, of five-and-twenty, had black hair and blue eyes; a combination often associated with the effect of beauty. The beauty in this case, however, was dim and latent, not vulgarly obvious; and if her height and slenderness gave that impression of length of line which, as we know, is the fashion, Mary Gosselin had, on the other hand, too much expression to be generally admired. Every one thought her "clever"; a few of the most simple-minded even thought her plain. What Guy Firminger thought,—or rather what he took for granted, for he was not built up on depths of reflection—will probably appear from this narrative.

"Yes indeed; things have come to a pass that's awful for *us*," the girl announced.

"For *us*, you mean," said Firminger. "We're hunted like the ostrich; we're trapped and stalked and run to earth. We go in fear,—I assure you we do."

"Are *you* hunted, Guy?" Mrs. Gosselin asked, with an inflection of her own.

"Yes, Mrs. Gosselin, even *moi qui vous parle*, the ordinary male of commerce, inconceivable as it may appear. I know something about it."

"And of whom do you go in fear?" Mary Gosselin asked, taking up an uncut book and a paper-knife which she had laid down on the advent of the other visitors.

"My dear child, of Diana and her nymphs, of the spinster at large. She's always out with her rifle. And it isn't only that; you know there's always a second gun, a walking arsenal at her heels. I forget, for the moment, who Diana's mother was, and the genealogy of the nymphs; but not

only do the old ladies know the younger ones are out, they distinctly go *with* them."

"Who was Diana's mother, my dear?" Mrs. Gosselin inquired of her daughter.

"She was a beautiful old lady with pink ribbons in her cap and a genius for knitting," the girl replied, cutting her book.

"Oh, I'm not speaking of you two dears; you're not like any one else; you're an immense comfort," said Guy Firminger. "But they've reduced it to a science, and I assure you that if one were any one in particular, if one were not protected by one's obscurity, one's life would be a burden. Upon my honour one wouldn't escape. I've seen it, I've watched them. Look at poor Beauprey,—look at little Raddle over there. He's offensive, but I bleed for him."

"Lord Beauprey won't marry again," said Mrs. Gosselin, with an air of conviction.

"So much the worse for him!"

"Come,—that's a concession to our charms!" Mary laughed.

But the ruthless young man explained away his concession. "I mean that to be married's the only protection,—or else to be engaged."

"To be permanently engaged,—wouldn't that do?" Mary Gosselin asked.

"Beautifully,—I would try it if I were a *parti*."

"And how's the little boy?" Mrs. Gosselin presently inquired.

"What little boy?"

"Your little cousin,—Lord Beauprey's child; isn't it a boy?"

"Oh, poor little beggar, he isn't up to much. He was awfully damaged by that scarlet fever."

"You're not the rose, indeed, but you're tolerably near it," the elder lady presently continued.

"What do you call near it? Not even in the same garden,—not in any garden at all, alas!"

"There are three lives,—but after all!"

"Dear lady, don't be homicidal!"

"What do you call the 'rose'?"

Mary asked of her mother.

"The title," said Mrs. Gosselin, promptly but softly.

Something in her tone made Firminger laugh aloud. "You don't mention the property."

"Oh, I mean the whole thing."

"Is the property very large?" said Mary Gosselin.

"Fifty thousand a year," her mother responded; at which the young man laughed out again.

"Take care, mamma, or we shall expose ourselves to mythological comparisons!" the girl exclaimed; a warning that elicited from Guy Firminger the just remark that there would be time enough for that when his prospects should be worth speaking of. He leaned over to pick up his hat and stick, as if it were his time to go, but he didn't go for another quarter of an hour, and during these minutes his prospects received some consideration. He was Lord Beauprey's first cousin, and the three interposing lives were his lordship's own, that of his little sickly son, and that of his uncle the Major, who was also Guy's uncle and with whom the young man was at present staying. It was from homely Trist, the Major's house, that he had walked over to Mrs. Gosselin's. Frank Firminger, who had married in youth a woman with something of her own and eventually left the army, had nothing but girls, but he was only of middle age and might possibly still have a son. At any rate, his life was a very good one. Beauprey might marry again, and, marry or not, he was barely thirty-three and might live to a great age. The child, moreover, poor little devil, would doubtless, with the growing consciousness of an incentive, develop a capacity for duration; so that altogether Guy professed himself, with the best will in the world, unable to take a rosy view of the disappearance of obstacles. He treated the subject with a jocularly that, in view of the remoteness of his chance,

was not wholly tasteless, and the discussion, between old friends and in the light of this extravagance, was less crude than perhaps it sounds. The young man quite declined to see any latent brilliancy in his future. They had all been lashing him up, his poor dear mother, his uncle Frank, and Beauprey as well, to make that future political; but even if he should get in (he was nursing—oh, so languidly!—a possible opening), it would only be into the shallow edge of the stream. He would stand there like a tall idiot with the water up to his ankles. He didn't know how to swim,—in that element; he didn't know how to do anything.

"I think you're very perverse, my dear," said Mrs. Gosselin. "I'm sure you have great dispositions."

"For what,—except for sitting here and talking with you and Mary? I like this sort of thing, but scarcely anything else."

"You'd do very well if you weren't so lazy," Mary said. "I believe you're the very laziest person in the world."

"So do I,—the very laziest in the world," the young man contentedly replied. "But how can I regret it, when it keeps me so quiet, when (I might even say,) it makes me so amiable?"

"You'll have, one of these days, to get over your quietness, and perhaps even a little over your amiability," Mrs. Gosselin sagaciously stated.

"I devoutly hope not."

"You'll have to perform the duties of your position."

"Do you mean keep my stump of a broom in order and my crossing irreproachable?"

"You may say what you like; you will be a *parti*," Mrs. Gosselin continued.

"Well, then, if the worst comes to the worst I shall do what I said just now, I shall get some good plausible girl to see me through."

"The proper way to 'get' her will be to marry her. After you're married you won't be a *parti*."

"Dear mamma, he'll think you're already beginning the siege!" Mary Gosselin laughingly wailed.

Guy Firminger looked at her a moment. "I say, Mary, wouldn't you do?"

"For the good plausible girl? Should I be plausible enough?"

"Surely,—what could be more natural? Everything would seem to contribute to the suitability of our alliance. I should be known to have known you for years,—from childhood's sunny hour; I should be known to have bullied you, and even to have been bullied by you, in the period of pinafores. My relations from a tender age with your brother, which led to our schoolroom romps in holidays, and to the happy footing on which your mother has always been so good as to receive me here, would add to all the presumptions of intimacy. People would accept such a conclusion as inevitable."

"Among all your reasons you don't mention the young lady's attractions," said Mary Gosselin.

Firminger stared a moment, his clear eye lighted by his happy thought. "I don't mention the young man's. They would be so obvious, on one side and the other, as to be taken for granted."

"And is it your idea that one should pretend to be engaged to you all one's life?"

"Oh no, simply till I should have had time to look round. I'm determined not to be hustled and bewildered into matrimony,—to be dragged to the altar before I know where I am. With such an arrangement as the one I speak of I should be able to take my time, to keep my head, to make my choice."

"And how would the young lady make hers?"

"How do you mean, hers?"

"The selfishness of men is something exquisite. Suppose the young lady,—if it's conceivable that you should find one idiotic enough to be a party to such a transaction—suppose

the poor girl herself should happen to wish to be really engaged?"

Guy Firminger thought a moment, with his slow but not stupid smile.

"Do you mean to me?"

"To you,—or to some one else."

"Oh, if she'd give me notice, I'd let her off."

"Let her off till you could find a substitute?"

"Yes,—but I confess it would be a great inconvenience. People wouldn't take the second one so seriously."

"She would have to make a sacrifice; she would have to wait till you should know where you were?" Mrs. Gosselin suggested.

"Yes, but where would *her* advantage come in?" Mary persisted.

"Only in the pleasure of charity; the moral satisfaction of doing a fellow a good turn," said Firminger.

"You must think one is eager to oblige you!"

"Ah, but surely I could count on *you*, couldn't I?" the young man asked.

Mary had finished cutting her book; she got up and flung it down on the tea-table. "What a preposterous conversation!" she exclaimed with force, tossing the words from her as she had tossed her book; and, looking round her vaguely a moment, without meeting Guy Firminger's eye, she walked away to the house.

Firminger sat watching her; then he said, serenely, to her mother: "Why has Mary left us?"

"She has gone to get something, I suppose."

"What has she gone to get?"

"A little stick to beat you, perhaps."

"You don't mean I've been objectionable?"

"Dear, no,—I'm joking. One thing is very certain," pursued Mrs. Gosselin; "that you ought to work and to try to get on exactly as if nothing could ever happen. Oughtn't you?" she insisted, as her visitor continued silent.

"I'm sure she doesn't like it!" he

exclaimed, without heeding her question.

"Doesn't like what?"

"The bad taste of my intellectual flights."

"You're very clever; she always likes *that*," said Mrs. Gosselin. "You ought to go in for something serious, for something honourable," she continued, "just as much as if you had nothing at all to look to."

"Words of wisdom, dear Mrs. Gosselin," Firminger replied, rising slowly from his relaxed attitude. "But what *have* I to look to?"

She raised her mild, deep eyes to him as he stood before her,—she might have been a fairy godmother.

"Everything!"

"But you know I can't poison them!"

"That won't be necessary."

He looked at her an instant; then, with a laugh: "One might think *you* would undertake it!"

"I almost would,—for *you*. Good-bye."

"Take care,—if *they* should be carried off!" But Mrs. Gosselin only repeated her good-bye, and the young man departed before Mary had come back.

II.

NEARLY two years after Guy Firminger had spent that friendly hour in Mrs. Gosselin's little garden in Hampshire, this far-seeing woman was enabled (by the return of her son, who, in New York, in an English bank, occupied a position in which they all rejoiced, to such great things might it possibly lead,) to resume possession for the season of the little house in London which her husband had left her to live in, but which her native thrift, in determining her to let it for a term, had converted into a source of income. Hugh Gosselin, who was thirty years old and had been despatched to America at twenty-three, before his father's death, to exert himself, was understood to be

doing very well,—so well that his devotion to the interests of his employers had been rewarded, for the first time, with a real holiday. He was to remain in England from May to August, undertaking, as he said, to make it all right if during this time his mother should occupy (to contribute to his entertainment) the habitation in Chester Street. He was a small, preoccupied young man, with a sharpness as acquired as a new coat; he struck his mother and sister as intensely American. For the first few days after his arrival they were startled by his intonations, though they admitted that they had had an escape when he reminded them that he might have brought with him an accent embodied in a wife.

"When you do take one," said Mrs. Gosselin, who regarded such an accident, over there, as inevitable, "you must charge her high for it."

It was not with this question, however, that the little family in Chester Street was mainly engaged, but with the last incident in the extraordinary succession of events which, like a chapter of romance, had in the course of a few months converted their vague and impecunious friend Guy Firminger into a personage envied and honoured. It was as if a blight had been cast on all his hindrances. On the day Hugh Gosselin sailed from New York the delicate little boy at Bosco had succumbed to an attack of diphtheria. His father had died of typhoid the previous winter at Naples; his uncle, a few weeks later, had had a fatal accident in the hunting-field. So strangely, so rapidly had the situation cleared up, had his fate and theirs worked for him. Guy had waked up one morning to an earldom which carried with it a fortune not alone nominally but really great. Mrs. Gosselin and Mary had not written to him, but they knew he was at Bosco; he had remained there after the funeral of the late little lord. Mrs. Gosselin, who heard everything, had heard

somehow that he was behaving with the greatest consideration, giving the guardians, the trustees, whatever they were called, plenty of time to do everything. Everything was comparatively simple; in the absence of collaterals there were so few other people concerned. The principal relatives were poor Frank Firminger's widow and her girls, who had seen themselves so near to new honours and luxuries. Probably the girls would expect their cousin Guy to marry one of them, and think it the least he could decently do; a view the young man himself (if he were very magnanimous) might possibly take. The question would be whether he would be very magnanimous. These young ladies were, without exception, almost painfully plain. On the other hand Guy Firminger,—or Lord Beauprey, as one would have to begin to call him now—was unmistakably kind. Mrs. Gosselin appealed to her son as to whether their noble friend were not unmistakably kind.

"Of course I've known him always, and that time he came out to America,—when was it? four years ago—I saw him every day. I like him awfully and all that, but since you push me, you know," said Hugh Gosselin, "I'm bound to say that the first thing to mention in any description of him would be,—if you wanted to be quite correct—that he's unmistakably selfish."

"I see,—I see," Mrs. Gosselin thoughtfully replied. "Of course I know what you mean," she added, in a moment. "But is he any more so than any one else? Every one's unmistakably selfish."

"Every one but you and Mary," said the young man.

"And *you*, dear!" his mother smiled. "But a person may be kind, you know,—mayn't he?—at the same time that he *is* selfish. There are different sorts."

"Different sorts of kindness?" Hugh Gosselin asked with a laugh; and

the inquiry undertaken by his mother occupied them for the moment, demanding a subtlety of treatment from which they were not conscious of shrinking, of which, rather, they had an idea that they were perhaps exceptionally capable. They came back to the fundamental proposition that Guy Firminger was indolent, that he would probably never do anything great, but that he might show himself all the same a delightful member of society. Yes, he was probably selfish, like other people; but unlike most of them he was, somehow, amiably, attachingly, sociably, almost lovably selfish. Without doing anything great he would yet be a great success,—a big, pleasant, gossiping, lounging and, in its way, doubtless very splendid presence. He would have no ambition, and it was ambition that made selfishness ugly. Hugh and his mother were sure of this last point until Mary, before whom the discussion, when it reached this stage, happened to be carried on, checked them by asking whether that, on the contrary, were not just what was supposed to make it fine.

"Oh, he only wants to be comfortable," said her brother; "but he *does* want."

"There'll be a tremendous rush for him," Mrs. Gosselin prophesied to her son.

"Oh, he'll never marry. It will be too much trouble."

"It's done here without any trouble,—for the men. One sees how long you've been out of the country."

"There was a girl in New York whom he might have married,—he really liked her. But he wouldn't turn round for her."

"Perhaps she wouldn't turn round for him," said Mary.

"I dare say she'll turn round *now*," Mrs. Gosselin rejoined; on which Hugh mentioned that there was nothing to be feared from her, all the revolutions had been accomplished. He added that nothing would make any difference,—so intimate was his

conviction that Beauprey would preserve his independence.

"Then I think he's not so selfish as you say," Mary declared; "or at any rate one will never know whether he is. Isn't married life the great chance to show it?"

"Your father never showed it," said Mrs. Gosselin; and as her children were silent in presence of this tribute to the departed, she added, smiling, "Perhaps you think that I did!" They embraced her, to indicate what they thought, and the conversation ended, when she had remarked that Lord Beauprey was a man who would be perfectly easy to manage *after* marriage, with Hugh's exclaiming that this was doubtless exactly why he wished to keep out of it.

Such was evidently his wish, as they were able to judge in Chester Street, when he came up to town. He appeared there oftener than was to have been expected, not taking himself, in his new character, at all too seriously to find stray half-hours for old friends. It was plain that he was going to do just as he liked, that he was not a bit excited or uplifted by his change of fortune. Mary Gosselin observed that he had no imagination,—she even reproached him with the deficiency to his face; an incident which showed indeed how little seriously *she* took him. He had no idea of playing a part, and yet he would have been clever enough. He wasn't even theoretic about being simple; his simplicity was a series of accidents and indifference. Never was a man more conscientiously superficial. There were matters on which he valued Mrs. Gosselin's judgment and asked her advice,—without, as usually appeared later, ever taking it; such questions, mainly, as the claims of a predecessor's servants and those, in respect to social intercourse, of the clergyman's family. He didn't like his parson,—what was he to do? What he did like was to talk with Hugh about American investments, and it was amusing to Hugh, though he tried not to show his

amusement, to find himself looking at Guy Firminger in the light of capital. To Mary he addressed from the first the oddest snatches of confidential discourse, rendered in fact, however, by the levity of his tone, considerably less confidential than in intention. He had something to tell her that he joked about, yet without admitting that it was any less important for being laughable. It was neither more nor less than that Charlotte Firminger, the eldest of his late uncle's four girls, had designated to him in the clearest manner the person she considered he ought to marry. She appealed to his sense of justice, she spoke and wrote, or at any rate she looked and moved, she sighed and sang, in the name of common honesty. He had had four letters from her that week, and to his knowledge there were a series of people in London, people she could bully, whom she had got to promise to take her in for the season. She was going to be on the spot, she was going to follow him up. He took his stand on common honesty, but he had a mortal horror of Charlotte. At the same time, when a girl had a jaw like that and had marked you,—really *marked* you, mind, you felt your safety oozing away. He had given them during the past three months, all those terrible girls, no end of presents; but every present had only been held to constitute another pledge. Therefore what was a fellow to do? Besides, there were other portents; the air was thick with them, as the sky over battlefields was darkened by the flight of vultures. They were flocking, the birds of prey, from every quarter, and every girl in England, by Jove! was going to be thrown at his head. What had he done to deserve such a fate? He wanted to stop in England and see all sorts of things through; but how could he stand there and face such a scramble? Yet what good would it do to bolt? Wherever he should go there would be fifty of them there first. On his honour he could say that he didn't deserve it; he had never, to his own

sense, been a flirt, such a flirt as to have given any one a handle. He appealed candidly to Mary Gosselin to know whether his past conduct justified such penalties. "*Have I been a flirt?—have I given any one a handle?*" he inquired with pathetic intensity.

She met his appeal by declaring that he had been awful, committing himself right and left; and this manner of treating his quandary contributed to the sarcastic publicity (as regarded the little house in Chester Street) which presently became its element. Lord Beauprey's comical and yet thoroughly grounded view of his danger was soon a frequent theme among the Gosselins, who, however, had their own reasons for not communicating the alarm. They had no motive for concealing their interest in their old friend, but their allusions to him among their other friends may be said on the whole to have been studied. His state of mind recalled of course to Mary and her mother the queer talk about his prospects that they had had that afternoon in the country, in which Mrs. Gosselin had been so strangely prophetic (she confessed that she had had a flash of divination; the future had been mysteriously revealed to her), and poor Guy too had seen himself quite as he was to be. He had seen his nervousness, under inevitable pressure, deepen to a panic, and he now, in intimate hours, made no attempt to disguise that a panic had become his portion. It was a fixed idea with him that he should fall a victim to woven toils, be caught in a trap constructed with superior science. The science evolved in an enterprising age by this branch of industry, the manufacture of the trap matrimonial, he had terrible anecdotes to illustrate; and what had he on his lips but a scientific term when he declared, as he perpetually did, that it was his fate to be hypnotised?

Mary Gosselin reminded him, they each in turn reminded him, that his safeguard was to fall in love; were he once to put himself under that protec-

tion all the mothers and maids in Mayfair would not prevail against him. He replied that that was just the impossibility ; it took leisure and calmness and opportunity and a free mind to fall in love, and never was a man less furnished with such conveniences. You couldn't at any rate do it *à point nommé*. He reminded the girl of his old fancy for pretending already to have disposed of his hand, if he could put that hand on a young person who should like him well enough to be willing to participate in the fraud. She would have to place herself in rather a false position, of course,—have to take a certain amount of trouble ; but there would after all be a good deal of fun in it (there was always fun in duping the world,) between the pair themselves, the two happy comedians.

"Why should they both be happy?" Mary Gosselin asked. "I understand why you should ; but, frankly, I don't quite grasp the reason of *her* pleasure."

Lord Beauprey, with his clear eyes, thought a moment. "Why, for the lark, as they say, and that sort of thing. I should be awfully nice to her."

"She would need indeed to be 'lark,' I think!"

"Ah, but I should want a good sort,—a quiet, reasonable one, you know!" he somewhat eagerly interposed.

"You're too delightful!" Mary Gosselin exclaimed, continuing to laugh. He thanked her for this appreciation, and she returned to her point—that she didn't really see the advantage his accomplice could hope to enjoy as her compensation for extreme inconvenience.

Guy Firminger stared. "But what extreme inconvenience——?"

"Why, it would take a lot of time ; it might become intolerable."

"You mean I ought to pay her,—to hire her for the season?"

Mary Gosselin looked at him a moment. "Wouldn't marriage come cheaper at once?" she asked with a quieter smile.

"You *are* laughing at me!" he sighed, forgivingly. "Of course she

would have to be good-natured enough to pity me."

"Pity's akin to love. If she were good-natured enough to want so to help you, she'd be good-natured enough to want to marry you. That would be *her* idea of help."

"Would it be *yours*?" Lord Beauprey asked, rather eagerly.

"You're too absurd! You must sail your own boat!" the girl answered, turning away.

That evening, at dinner, she stated to her companions that she had never seen a fatuity so dense, so serene, so preposterous as his lordship's.

"Fatuity, my dear! what do you mean?" her mother inquired.

"Oh, mamma, you know perfectly." Mary Gosselin spoke with a certain impatience.

"If you mean he's conceited, I'm bound to say I don't agree with you," her brother observed.

"He's not vain, he's not proud, he's not pompous," said Mrs. Gosselin.

Mary was silent a moment. "He takes more things for granted than any one I ever saw."

"What sort of things?"

"Well, one's interest in his affairs."

"With old friends, surely, a gentleman may."

"Of course," said Hugh Gosselin, "old friends have in turn the right to take for granted a corresponding interest on *his* part."

"Well, who could be nicer to us than he is or come to see us oftener?" his mother asked.

"He comes exactly for the purpose I speak of,—to talk about himself," said Mary.

"There are thousands of girls who would be delighted that he should," Mrs. Gosselin returned.

"We agreed long ago that he's intensely selfish," the girl went on ; "and if I speak of it to-day it's not because that in itself is anything of a novelty. What I'm freshly struck with is simply that he more flagrantly shows it."

"He shows it, exactly," said Hugh ;

"he shows all there is. There it is, on the surface; there are not depths of it underneath."

"He's not hard," Mrs. Gosselin contended; "he's not hard."

"Do you mean he's soft?" Mary asked.

"I mean he's easy." And Mrs. Gosselin, with considerable expression, looked across at her daughter. She added, before they rose from dinner, that poor Lord Beauprey had plenty of difficulties and that she thought, for her part, they ought in common loyalty to do what they could to assist him.

For a week nothing more passed between the two ladies on the subject of their noble friend, and in the course of this week they had the amusement of receiving in Chester Street a member of Hugh's American circle, Mr. Boston-Brown, a young man from New York. He was a person engaged in large affairs, for whom Hugh Gosselin professed the highest regard, from whom in New York he had received much hospitality, and for whose advent he had from the first prepared his companions. Mrs. Gosselin begged the amiable stranger to stay with them, and if she failed to vanquish his hesitation it was because his hotel was near at hand and he should be able to see them often. It became evident that he would do so, and, to the two ladies, as the days went by, equally evident that no objection to such a relation was likely to arise. Mr. Boston-Brown was delightfully fresh; the most usual expressions acquired on his lips a well-nigh comical novelty, the most superficial sentiments, in the look with which he accompanied them, a really touching sincerity. He was unmarried and good-looking, clever and

natural, and if he was not very rich he was, at least, very free-handed. He literally strewed the path of the ladies in Chester Street with flowers, he choked them with French confectionery. Hugh, however, who was often rather mysterious on monetary questions, placed in a light sufficiently clear the fact that his friend had in Wall Street (they knew all about Wall Street) improved the shining hour. They introduced him to Lord Beauprey, who thought him "tremendous fun," as Hugh said, and who immediately declared that the four must spend a Sunday at Bosco a week or two later. The date of this visit was fixed.—Mrs. Gosselin had uttered a comprehensive acceptance; but after Guy Firminger had taken leave of them (this had been his first appearance since the odd conversation with Mary), our young lady confided to her mother that she should not be able to join the little party. She expressed the conviction that it would be all that was essential if Mrs. Gosselin should go with the two others. On being pressed to communicate the reason of this aloofness Mary was able to give no better one than that she never had cared for Bosco.

"What makes you hate him so?" her mother broke out in a moment, in a tone which brought the red to the girl's cheek. Mary denied that she entertained for Lord Beauprey any sentiment so intense; to which Mrs. Gosselin rejoined with some sternness and, no doubt, considerable wisdom: "Look out what you do, then, or you'll be thought to be in love with him!"

HENRY JAMES.

(To be continued.)

THE STRANGER IN THE HOUSE.

THE Duke of Wellington was accustomed to say that the presence or absence of Napoleon in the field made a difference of forty thousand men. It would perhaps be difficult to form an estimate of this kind as to the exact value of Mr. Gladstone's presence in the House of Commons, but assuredly it puts a new aspect upon even the most ordinary business. When he returned recently to the scene of so many of his triumphs,—and of not a few defeats—his followers were apparently overjoyed to see him; and yet he had not been there four-and-twenty hours before a group of them disregarded his advice on a practical question of some importance, and divided the House two or three times against the course which he had recommended. It must necessarily be rather trying to be exposed to these indignities, especially when it is remembered that the fortunes of the Radical party are so largely dependent on Mr. Gladstone's personal efforts and influence. Without him the party has no hope of cohesion, and comparatively little prospect of success. But when he endeavours to lead them no inconsiderable section decline to follow, as in the memorable instance of the Royal Grants, when he exhorted them to follow him into one lobby and they defiantly and ostentatiously walked into the other. Mr. Gladstone would have received no such treatment as this from the party with which he was formerly associated. The Conservatives would have rendered him the tribute of a loyal support which is merely professed by the Radicals, and even these professions are made chiefly from platforms in the country. The Conservatives are seldom refractory when they are properly led. A man who deliberately or perversely opposes

his leader is frowned upon by the rest of his party, although he may happen to be at times entirely in the right. There may be occasional discontent, but it is kept entirely for private consumption. If Mr. Gladstone had done half as much for the Conservatives as he has done for the Liberals, he would now exercise an absolute supremacy. No mutinous spirits like those which hover on the flanks of the Liberal party would dare to cross his path. No Mr. Labouchere would be permitted to offer resistance to his counsels, or to sneer at his authority. And what a power he would have been for the last twenty years on the side of true and wise progress, combined with the careful preservations of the "bulwarks of the Constitution," now nearly submerged! Not only his own history, but that of his country, would have been completely changed.

All this might, and most probably would, have happened if it had not been for the accident of Mr. Disraeli standing in the way. There was not room for these two proud spirits in the same party. Not the least strange part of the business is that at the critical time when Mr. Gladstone might have been secured, the Conservatives were anxious to get rid of Mr. Disraeli. In December, 1856, Lord Derby wrote to Lord Malmesbury: "As to Disraeli's unpopularity, I see it, and regret it; and especially regret that he does not see more of the party in private." He made them feel that they could not do without him, but many a year had to pass before they went through the form of professing any attachment to him. Probably the Conservatives of the present day forget all these things, if they ever knew them; but they cannot shut their eyes to the fact that

the Radicals are most fortunate in having a chief who possesses an immense hold upon the country, and whose presence in the House of Commons is, as I have said, worth half an army. The Conservatives have no such advantage. To the bulk of the rank and file of their party throughout the country, Lord Salisbury is a half mythical personage. Doubtless he lives, for speeches delivered by him occasionally make their appearance in the newspapers, and there are some people who have actually seen him. But to the "masses" he is a mere name, and not a name to conjure with. Who else is there? Mr. Balfour. Yes, but he has not yet undergone the test of a long trial, and already he begins to shrink up, like that awful *peau de chagrin* of Balzac's. Looking into the House any evening now, even from my point of view as a stranger, it is manifest that something or other has gone wrong. It may be hard at first, and to the outside observer, to discern precisely where the machinery has broken down, but what is perfectly obvious is that there is no smoothness in its working. It creaks and groans heavily, and sometimes it turns out a product altogether different from that which was desired or expected. Nobody seems to be able to control it. Any one who has been in a heavy storm at sea may have noticed that at times the screw is lifted completely out of the water, and that it then revolves with terrific velocity, but without helping the ship along one inch. The sailors call it a "racer." That is what the House of Commons is now, at least two or three times a week, — a "racer." After it has been pounding and throbbing away for many hours it is seen to be in exactly the same position as when it started. Of course, then, we must conclude that there has been obstruction in one or other of its Protean forms? Certainly not in the first weeks of the Session. There was some waste of time, but it cannot honestly be laid to the door of the Opposition. And as for the Conservatives,

they have not had a chance even to bleat. The early annexation of Private Members' nights showed them the uselessness of balloting for a chance of bringing in the motions in which they are interested, and they have consented to be utterly effaced. The Front Benchers have everything their own way. And that reminds me to mention that once or twice of late I have noticed an innovation on the part of Mr. Courtney, the Chairman of Committees, which to my untutored mind appears to be eminently wise as well as conducive to the public interests. When a Private Member and a Front Bencher have risen together, Mr. Courtney has not always and as a matter of course called upon the Front Bencher. He has given the unofficial Member a chance. And why not? The Front Benchers fancy that the House and the country can never have enough of them, which I am convinced is a complete delusion. They think nothing of talking for a whole hour, simply because they have once held an office, in which the chances are that they by no means distinguished themselves. The tyranny of the Front Bench has already provoked the remonstrances of more than one able private Member, and some of these days there will be a formidable rising against it. Meanwhile, Mr. Courtney shows great good sense in occasionally ignoring these intrusive and troublesome personages. A Minister occupying an important position ought, of course, to take the *pas*, but the others should be allowed a fair chance with the Private Member, and nothing more.

This very difficult matter of calling upon one person to address the House when four or five have risen at the same time is settled in a great measure by the character a Member bears in the House, and this is a delicate point on which a mere observer is not in a position to form a trustworthy opinion. There is no one so pre-eminently fitted to deal with it as the present Speaker, Mr. Peel. He watches everybody

closely, he sees all that is going on, and he is never at fault in his estimate of men. He knows precisely how any individual Member is regarded on both sides of the House, he is strictly impartial, his judgment is absolutely unaffected by prejudices of any kind. Character is of inestimable value in any of the relations of life, but nowhere does it tell more immediately on a man's career than in the House of Commons. Members are brought closely into contact with one another in Committee work and at other times, and the prevailing opinion of the House with regard to any man is seldom wrong. It would be easy to name some men who are universally respected on both sides, although it may be that they seldom speak, and perhaps they are little known to the public. But the House is aware that they seldom fail to exercise good judgment, whether in speaking or in refraining from speech, and that their opinions are formed upon due reflection, and are not flung out wildly or without any sense of responsibility. On the other hand, there are Members, not a few, whose conceit or stupidity render them utterly oblivious to the temper and mood of the assembly which they are addressing, and who never have a moment's doubt that the whole world is waiting with bated breath to be made acquainted with their opinions. To suppress them entirely is impossible, for when everybody else has spoken they must be heard if they persist, although the House occasionally takes the law into its own hands and sternly puts them down. It is much to be regretted that it uses this power much less frequently than it did in former days. But the rusty weapon was brought out on the night of the debate on receiving the votes of the "three Members," to which I shall presently refer, and the effect was highly salutary. The person who invited the punishment, and who, it must frankly be said, often invites it, was Mr. Alpheus Cleophas Morton, Member for Peter-

borough. The debate had evidently closed, and the House had made up its mind for a division, when there rose in the background the dreaded figure of Mr. Morton. Not one word that he uttered could be heard. The House has put up with him very often, sorely against its grain, but that evening it would not submit to the infliction. After struggling for five minutes or so, Mr. Morton resumed his seat, and a judicious friend would strongly recommend him to remain quietly in it for some time to come.

But I was pointing out that something has gone wrong with the management of the House, and that is a very serious fact, especially at a time when the Ministerial forces have been much reduced by causes into which it would be unprofitable to enter here. Whose fault is it? There can be but one answer to the question. Mr. Balfour has not yet risen to the requirements of his new office. He cannot throw off the tendencies and the habits which he acquired as Irish Secretary. He is still too prone to unnecessary "flouts and jeers," a dangerous amusement in which poor Mr. Smith never indulged. He treats everything in an indolent, cynical, superficial manner, as if he took no real interest in what he happens to be doing. So it appears to an outsider like myself; but one who knows Mr. Balfour well assures me that in reality he is very anxious about his duties, and that his devil-may-care manner is a mere affectation. Well, then, what a pity it is that he takes the trouble to assume it, for it does not help him with his daily and nightly work, it cannot possibly remove a single difficulty from his path, and it discourages his own party while it gives strength and hope to the enemy. Surveyed from my corner in the gallery Mr. Balfour looks like a gentleman who is being profoundly bored, and who wants to go home to bed. If that, or anything like it, is really his state of mind, one cannot wonder at the unfortunate incidents

which have thus far marked his career as leader.

As Irish Secretary Mr. Balfour got into the way of making a good many speeches, and most of them were necessary. But that same habit sticks to him, and now the speeches are very seldom necessary, and are often exceedingly mischievous. He argues, he refines, he holds the House by the button-hole and lectures it, and worst of all, when the time for action arrives, he does not know how to make up his mind. The chief Ministerial Whip is sent for, and there is a consultation. Somebody else is sent for, and there is another long and whispered palaver. A colleague must be consulted, and he cannot be found. Meanwhile the debate is all drifting on anyhow and anywhere, time is being wasted, and the House feels itself without a leader. Mr. Balfour will even begin a speech in one vein and finish it in a totally different one. I must give an instance of which I was an eyewitness. Three Members of the House, as everybody knows, unwisely voted for a grant of the public money to the Mombasa Railway, they being directors of the East Africa Company, and therefore having, as was contended, a direct pecuniary and personal interest in the scheme. It is usual, when such votes are challenged, to submit to the House itself the question whether or not they shall be disallowed. That was the course taken on the present occasion. The hour for the division on this question was at hand, and Mr. Balfour rose to close the discussion. Had he candidly acknowledged that the three Members had made a mistake in voting, and asked the House to proceed no further, it is just possible that the matter would have dropped then and there. Or he might have taken another course and invited his party to support the three Members, on the ground that their interest in the railway was not of that direct and immediate kind which calls for special animadversion. But he did neither the one thing nor the other. He began his speech by

distinctly stating the Government, "as a Government," would take no part in the controversy, but would leave it entirely to the decision of the House. And then he proceeded to defend the votes of the three Members on grounds which were absolutely untenable, and which provoked murmurs from some of the most faithful of his followers behind him. Moreover, they provoked Mr. Gladstone into making a crushing rejoinder, which put Mr. Balfour into a corner, and left him there bound and helpless. Mr. Gladstone showed that the benefit to be derived by the grant for the railroad was limited strictly to the persons interested in the East Africa Company, and was in fact nothing more nor less than a proposal "To reimburse out of public funds an outlay for which these gentlemen themselves are personally responsible." Well, then, what happened? Mr. Balfour having announced that Members would be free to vote as they pleased, a considerable number of Conservatives took him at his word, and either walked out without voting, or went into the lobby for disallowing the disputed votes. The result was that Mr. Balfour and his colleagues found themselves in a minority, although just before the division it was known that the Government had a clear majority of over fifty in the House. Mr. Balfour is said to have felt this blow very keenly, but it was by his own act that it fell upon him. In the first place, he made a very injudicious speech; in the next, he was too timid or too much in doubt to say plainly to his party, "Follow me into the lobby." A party must be led. It is not safe to tell it to do as it likes, when you particularly want it to go in a given direction. *Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée.* Mr. Balfour has no decision, and the responsibilities of his new position appear to frighten him. He wavers, hesitates, looks round for something to turn up that will help him out of his difficulty, and all the time the House is slipping out of his hands.

No doubt he will improve upon all this, or "reform it altogether;" but it will never be possible to deny that the early part of his career as leader of the House was marked by some most unfortunate blunders,—blunders for which no one was prepared. And yet how often it happens in this world that a man who has done remarkably well in one position breaks down in a surprising manner when he is placed in another position for which a different set of qualities is required.

It followed from all this that business made little if any progress, and that it was found necessary to curtail the privileges of the unfortunate Private Member, who is always selected as the scapegoat for the faults of everybody else. Money had to be obtained, and it was not an easy thing to get, for it was required on a sort of peremptory summons, and the House of Commons is a bad place to go to in that spirit. It will not be driven, unless the driving apparatus is very skillfully concealed. The army, however, could not wait, neither could the navy, and after more or less difficulty some millions were obtained for both. Mr. Stanhope and Lord George Hamilton managed this part of the affair very adroitly, giving just such explanations as were asked for, and avoiding travelling into regions concerning which no enquiry was being made. It must seem strange to everybody who thinks about it that the defences of this country should be placed under the control of two civilians, who usually enter upon their offices in utter ignorance of everything they are called upon to administer. Such is the system adopted in this country, and Parliament has more than once shown an extreme jealousy of any interference with it. The Secretary for War and the First Lord of the Admiralty are, of course, advised by professional assistants; but as they have no knowledge of their own to start with, they are necessarily in the hands of persons who may have their own crotchets to carry out, and who are perhaps more

intent upon them than upon bringing the "fighting machine" to perfection. The Naval or War Minister is expected to defend his department in the House of Commons, and he generally contrives to do that with a fair measure of success. Under the gallery, on an important night, he takes care to have some of his most valuable subordinates, and if he finds himself getting out of his depth he can always place himself in communication with them, and secure ample material with which to dislodge and put to rout the outside critic. Mr. Stanhope is a model official in this respect. He has no hesitation, no misgivings. Towards the persons who have been attacking the administration of the army he assumes a tone of gentle pity, as of a man who is sorry for their ignorance and who would fain put them upon the right road if he could only get them there. Eighteen years' experience of Parliamentary life has grounded him thoroughly in the art of convincing the House of Commons, and of marshalling his statements so that no one shall be able to discover their weak points on the spur of the moment. He is now familiar with the routine of his office, and no doubt has acquired a great deal of valuable information about the army. Presently, therefore, in the ordinary course of events, he will have to retire and somebody will be put in his place who has to begin learning the business from the very beginning. Thus far in this Session Mr. Stanhope has had no more difficult task to encounter than that of replying to a long, rambling, and disjointed attack by Mr. Hanbury, who has the misfortune of mistaking loose gossip for facts, and who contrives to place himself at the mercy of any well-informed official. Mr. Stanhope is quite at home in dealing with a critic of this description, and it was really worth while to hear him make short work of Mr. Hanbury's long yarn. A professional soldier could not have done it half so well. We may not have so good an army as we ought to get for the money annually paid for

it, but it certainly has not deteriorated under Mr. Stanhope's rule.

Lord George Hamilton is not quite so deft an apologist, but he also has made himself master of most of the details of the work of his great department, and he knows how to reproduce his knowledge with considerable effect. His manner is not so confident as that of Mr. Stanhope; his flow of language is not so easy; he cannot assume so perfectly the air of an injured innocent. But it has to be borne in mind that he has to meet, not amateurs like Mr. Hanbury, but professional men who know what they are talking about. He therefore has to feel his way along with considerable caution. He has never made any grave mistake, and he takes good care not to say a word more than is strictly necessary for his purpose. Until a Minister has made himself master of that secret, he will always be in danger of meeting with some unexpected and severe mishap. The least said the soonest mended, runs the homely proverb, and never was more wisdom packed into fewer words. If Mr. Balfour had well digested it before the present Session opened, he would have spared himself and his party some mortifications and reverses.

The other evening I was invited to dinner in the room which is set apart for members and their friends, and I noticed that the talk all round me did not turn upon what was going on in the House, but upon the probable time when Parliament would be dissolved. The sands are running low in the glass, and many of the present Members know perfectly well that they are destined to return no more to this

Temple of the Muses. I failed to see any signs of that exuberance of spirits which the prospect of a general election is supposed to excite. There were well known Gladstonians near me, but they seemed by no means anxious to hurry forward the great trial of strength. Only those were happy who have made up their minds to retire voluntarily from the scene of so much hard and thankless work. People who have anything to gain by being Members of Parliament want to stay; those who have nothing to gain get tired of it all much sooner than they used to do. Some Members are so overwhelmed with the work of replying to letters that half the day is gone before they have finished with that part of their labours, and they may count themselves lucky if their cheque-book has not played an important part in the correspondence. Others are hunted down by cadgers, loafers, and humbugs of all kinds. Yet some of these persons may possibly be useful at election time, and it does not do to run the risk of offending anybody. The Metropolitan Members are the worst off in this respect, because their constituents live close by, and can drop in, as it were, at any moment. A wise man will take care, if he possibly can, to place two or three hundred miles between himself and his dear friends whose votes make him a Member of Parliament. So much have I learnt from my occasional visits to the lobby and the dining-room, and I gladly give the benefit of my observations to all intending candidates, whatever their politics may happen to be.

END OF VOL. LXV.

